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[WAITING.]

THE LITTLE PRINCESS.

CHAPTER I.

So looks the pent-up lion o'er the wretch
That trembles under his devouring paws.

Shakespeare.

It was a picture, framed in by a heavy stone arch, dripping with rain. It was only a child—an ordinary child, over whose head was pinned a small handkerchief that had once flaunted rich colours on the neck of some fashionable lady. The handkerchief was tied in a knot under the girl's chin. Her large eyes, dark and sad—one might almost have said hungry in their yearning outlook—scanned the clouds that could be seen through an alley that extended straight on. One hand hung listless, grasping a much-worn tambourine, whose tiny bells now and then gave a faint, musical echo, as the child moved to let a stranger pass.

The arch was a passage-way for porters and tradesmen, under a large hotel, and in its shadow, leaning against the stones, stood an old man whose sightless eyeballs rolled vacantly. A gray frieze bag, from which projected a bow and the slender top of a violin, hung from his neck. His hands were folded listlessly, and his face was as passive as though it had been wrought in marble. He was evidently very tired, as was the girl, who soon grew weary of speculating upon the weather, and turned her glance to other objects. She thought how bright were the three gilt balls opposite, wondered if they were gold, wondered why so many people wandered in and out over the muddy threshold beneath them, wondered if the carts and carriages kept up such a stream of travel all night.

At that moment sounded the gong overhead—a long, doleful, shivering reverberation, that awoke all the echoes of the old court. Flor started, and the tambourine gave a musical gurgle. She had to stand aside now, for the stream of workmen who had been repairing some part of the place was coming out—a rough, harsh chorus of voices, all talking

together. The child stood there and looked thoughtfully on.

"I wonder where they all go to?" she queried. "I wonder if they've all got little children?"

The thought caused her to chuckle merrily to herself. Some one a little rougher than his fellows, pushed against her. She drew her slight form up and shook her head with a sort of child dignity, that, if one had not known the reason for it, seemed ludicrous pantomime. Then, with one thrust of her hand towards the graceless fellow, she turned the dark corner where the old man kept his place.

"How are you, gran'pa?" she asked, in a merry voice.

"I'm right well, my child. Where have you been?"

"Nowhere but here. How it did rain! but it only drops now and then. I say, gran'pa, if I'd only had an umbrella I'd have taken a walk. Don't you like the rain? I do; I put my head out and let it patter on it. Are you cold?"

"No, child; but is it quite dark?"

"Dark as pitch, only for the lights. They stream over here. Every shop window is blazing, and they have got some nice things for Christmas. And if I earn anything extra, I know what I'll buy. I've seen her—with cheeks as red as roses, and eyes as bright as stars—and I'll buy her!"

"Poor child!" sighed the old man, "I think shoes before dolls; they're almost gone, I know."

"Only the toes, gran'pa, and who cares for toes? Besides, they're not out yet; they're only cracking. But you know supper's begun—they've got nicely seated at the table now, my Little Red Riding Hood and all—my handsome man with the black whiskers, my beautiful lady, who always smiles at me—come, gran'pa, give me your hand, here we are."

And counting the steps for his guidance they moved slowly up into the spacious and well-lighted vestibule of the great hotel.

Taking their position near the door of the dining-room (the outer door was swung back and fastened, only the door of green baize intervened between

them and the gay groups within), the old man, after drinking in the summer warmth through every fibre of his spare frame, loosened the mouth of the bag, and took therefrom a dainty little instrument, yellow and shining, while the girl Florence shook her tambourine a little, and kept her eyes fixed in the direction of the door, that she might, every time it was thrown open, catch one glimpse of the beauty and grandeur within.

For, with its three great chandeliers lighted, throwing a soft yellow lustre over the wide room, shining on numbers of richly-dressed women, on the silver and glass of the long tables, it was to the cold and hungry child like a glimpse into paradise. She forgot all her little troubles—forgot that she was alone and a wanderer. There sat that beautiful child, with the little red sash tied daintily around her white frock, and crimson knots on each shoulder. That child and its mother were Flor's little Red-Riding Hood and the beautiful lady. It made her heart leap almost to her throat when the supper was ended, and she stood shyly back, and yet near enough to receive one smile from the beautiful lady. It seemed to her that she had, somewhere in her life, in a sort of misty, far-reaching consciousness, such as we elder people often experience, loved and been loved by that woman, that her dark soft eyes had bent towards her, filled with the tenderest light, such as only the caress of an innocent child calls forth.

The old blind fiddler did his best that night.

"That fellow is a study," one said to another. Two young men had left the table d'hôte early. "I'd give a good deal if Foley would put him in marble. He's a pious old mendicant."

"How in the world did the man with a head like that come to such a pass? He plays remarkably well—and the girl is not bad looking."

This Florence heard while her nimble little fingers plied the tambourine, and the bells kept up their sweet tintinnabulation.

"She is a sort of protégée of Mrs. Walters. isn't she?"

"I don't know; the lady has been getting up a contribution for her," said the second speaker.

"By the way, who is this Mrs. Walters?"

"Oh, a rich widow—and yet poor as a church mouse. Her husband was Walters, the great contractor—worth his millions; but the old heathen tied up his money so in his will, that while the child is under age, the mother cannot actually do more than board and dress in the style to which she has been accustomed. No man would marry her under those conditions, so he keeps the money-hunters off. Bright thought in him."

At this moment the green doors were thrown back by the obsequious waiters, and the brilliant throng came out and began slowly ascending the great staircase. Flor stood back, holding her breath almost—her great dewy eyes, eager, yet half frightened, roving from face to face, as if she were reading there the destinies of each. To her, the multitude seemed like so many princes and queens; she had heard often of these royal personages. Well that the child could not see, under that outward show, the folly, the pomp, pride and vain-glory of that miniature world. The gambler, the debauchee, the killer of reputations, the frivolous-minded worldling—all were there; the pure and the good were but the few among many.

She could not see either under the mask of smiles that wreathed the faces of all the pain there was in some hearts, which it was all their owners could do to conceal. Yet at one scene she wondered, which a glimpse through a half-opened door showed her.

A man stood with the hands of a beautiful woman clasped in his own. Her eyes were looking up into his with a most tender expression, while he seemed gazing down into their very depths.

Behind them, looking out from a curtained alcove, was a woman as fair as the other, but instead of smiles there was a look of rage and hate upon her face. Her hands were clenched and her whole attitude was one of fierce passion.

The child wondered how this could be while all about her was so bright and beautiful.

But her attention was turned from a scene which she but half comprehended, to another which more nearly concerned her.

One from among the throng, who was the beautiful lady, glided out like an angel, holding Little Red-Riding Hood by the hand.

"Here is something for your old grandfater, my dear child, and come here early on Christmas morning."

She was gone, the child looking curiously back over her scarlet shoulders, and slowly, slowly the two seemed to melt away in the long distance.

"Oh, gran'pa, there's lots of money here!" cried the little girl, breathlessly. "Have you got a whole pocket? Oh dear! I'm so afraid it will be stolen! Yes, that pocket is safe, and I shall watch you the whole way home; so don't be a bit afraid," she ran on, inserting a finger carefully through the gaping, dingy lining of the old man's vest pocket, and cautiously depositing the coins. "Oh gran'pa, isn't it nice and warm here? don't you dread to go out into the cold, dark, sloppy street? Well, well, give them one more—there's a few gentlemen in there now, and people are crossing all the time. Oh, where do such a many people sleep?"

It was an old aid, well worn hearing. In the middle of it the baize door opened, and two or three gentlemen sauntered out. Florence was looking the other way, but as she turned her glance she caught her breath, ceased her brilliant thrumming, and stood like one stupefied. Then she dashed down the tambourine, which fell with a loud crash of all its metal bells.

Down the hall she sped, after the two figures retreating so rapidly. One of them seemed almost to fly. Not so fast, however, but that all suddenly his arm was caught, and a dead weight hung thereon—a little gasping, sobbing breath now made him shiver.

"Oh, Hubert!" the cry rang out, "I knew you—I knew you! Here I am, safe—I was never drowned, Hubert."

The slight, elegant-looking young man shook his arm angrily, but he could not shake her off—he could not stop that wild, sobbing repetition of his name.

"Is this thing crazy?" laughed his companion.

"Heaven knows. Be off with you, girl! What are you hanging to me for? I don't know you."

"Oh, Hubert, because I am so dirty and ragged! I did try so hard to keep clean, but they were all so poor! We had no money, you know—no money; but they were good to me—and I had to play in the street, or I should have starved, you know. I am little Flor, and I'm nine years old now. I didn't forget you, I've never forgot you. Oh, do, do believe

me—I am—I am little Flor—you must believe me, Hubert!"

"Upon my word, she's a consummate little actress," said Hubert's friend, "or there's something in it."

"She's crazy," whispered the other, aside. "I'll give her some money, I'll soothe her. See here, child, my room is number nine. I'm not going there now, but—here, John—to a waiter—show this little one in number nine. I'll be there in a few moments." And languidly moving off, he took his way to the office where he was to bid his friend adieu.

"Well, well! that's a curious circumstance," said the latter. "How did the creature know your name?"

"Oh, she has found out in some way. The old fellow was an accomplice, probably, and he has taught her this. Not a bad-looking child, eh? Pah! so dirty, though. All these wanderers are cunning. They have to be, I suppose."

There was a strange expression in the young man's cold blue eyes. Handsome eyes they were—large, liquid, and at times gentle and beautiful as the eyes of a dove; indeed, the whole face was singularly handsome, and although the man was over twenty, he did not look much older than a youth of eighteen. In figure, as we have said, he was slight and willowy, but there was a promise of more generous proportions. He was not a common-looking man, this John Hubert Livingston—not a man with a cunning face, square shoulders, from which his coat hung in wrinkles, or broad, vulgar brow, but every whit the gentleman; one that you might suppose had never seen the inside of anything less pretentious than a four-story house.

Little Flor followed the waiter to number nine. The child's heart was beating as it never had before, and her sensitive organism was strung up almost to rupture. She had found one who had been watching for her three long years. He didn't remember her yet, of course not—and she glanced with a look of shame at her mean garments. Oh, if she only could have been neat and nice when he saw her—he who had seen her under such different circumstances.

And entering this beautiful room instinctively she pressed her hands hard against the sides of her dress, and wished she were anywhere else. The waiter left her, closing the door. Flor gazed eagerly about her. Dimly remembering former splendours, the great carved bedstead, the shining satin hangings covered with lacy white lace, the large oval mirror, the richly covered carpet, in which she would have been placed to hide her nearly worn-out shoes, did not affect her as an unaccustomed sight, vagrant though she was; but still it seemed to her like a picture in a dream. She thought not once of the blind old man she had deserted; her soul was cognizant only of one object—the man upon whose arm she had hung.

"No wonder he didn't know me," she said to herself. "But he will—he will! and oh, he'll be so glad! I know. He'll take me with him, perhaps. And just as soon as he sees me in nice clothes, he'll be glad I found him. Why, I'm ever so much taller," she went on, gazing at herself in the glass, tearing the faded gaudiness from her neck, where she had slipped it off her head. "My hair was all curly then, and now it's out off. My cheeks were red, too—poor papa used to call me his little rosebud. Now won't the folks in Poplar Court be sorry they didn't believe me!" she cried aloud, her eyes shining like diamonds. "Now what'll they say? To be sure, he wasn't my very own brother, but papa always told me I must love him as well. Oh, what good times we used to have, before that awful day! And poor papa!" Her little bosom heaved with a convulsive sob. She stood there for a moment, the picture of childish woe, and not hearing the door open; but presently she turned.

The young man had entered, and was leisurely taking off his coat. He seemed to avoid looking at her; he was silent; not a sound was heard save the creaking of his shoes. With the same immobility of countenance, he laid his coat upon an arm-chair, took down an elegant dressing-gown, deliberately arrayed himself in it, tied the two crimson cords together, fastidiously arranged the great silken tassels side by side, placed his cap on gently, went to the closet, took from thence a pair of velvet slippers, inserted his feet within, and finally, after a long, fidgeting search, drew a cigar from a pretty little case that adorned the mantel-piece, as slowly lighted a match, and, seating himself with the utmost deliberation, began to smoke, and as coolly to survey the child.

The poor thing stood there, trembling in every limb. This was something so different from the pretty little visions she had been indulging in—this was something so very, very different! She turned red in the face, feeling the crimson mount to the very roots of her hair; her eyes fell; she seemed to be

one enormous pulse, beating with an awful rapidity and going to stop entirely soon.

And still that face opposite her stared and glared between the gray-white clouds of smoke. She wished herself anywhere but here. Poplar Court was paradise to this. A sense of this man's injustice towards her, though he had said nothing, burned hotly in her poor little bosom. She clenched her hands. She wanted to pinch, to strike, to punish him in some way.

And still he smoked on—still those eyes, so large and perfectly-shaped, looked her through and through, as though in each iris were points of steel. The child wanted to cry, to scream, to run. Her lip quivered, the hot tears started and stood trembling on her eyelids: she was wounded—it was dreadfully cruel to treat her so like a dumb, soulless animal. At last, he took the cigar from his lips.

"Well," he said, in low, clear, cutting tones, "you're about over it now, I suppose."

She lifted her eyes a moment, they fell as suddenly, and tears fell too—tears hot from the fount of outraged feeling. It was evident she did not know what to say—that she was entirely at his mercy now.

"See here, what did you mean, telling me that miserable story downstairs? If you had been a boy, I'd have shaken your life out of you. What did you mean?"

"Oh, Hubert—I—"

And the tears came with almost a scream.

"None of that!" He leaned both hands on the table, his cigar was slowly dying out, and the ashes were as dead as her hopes now. "None of that, you little impostor, or I'll horsewhip you on the spot!" He pointed to a delicate riding-whip hanging from some article of furniture near, and the child covered at his now tigerish-looking eyes, at the same time backing away from him almost imperceptibly. "And see here," he spoke again, "if ever you cross my path, if ever by word, look or deed you pretend to know me, if ever you dare to shame me again by any of your low-lived exhibitions for the purpose of getting money out of me I'll shoot you, as sure as I live!"

"But—" quivered the child's lips.

"None of your impudence, I tell you! How you learned that story I can't tell, and I don't care; but listen to me. Flor Livingston was drowned—deep, deep fathoms under the ocean. Do you take me for an idiot? You and that old impostor are leagued together, I suppose. Look out! I'll have you both in gaol—do you hear?—in gaol! I could easily put you there to-night—easily go out here and call a policeman; and he'd never listen to you, but carry you off instantly. I won't do that this time; I'll let you go, though you have mortified me enough. But the next time—beware!"

The child had been moving uneasily back step by step. She had brought her hands together, the little fingers working over each other in a piteous way; but at the mention of the word gaol her whole frame seemed to collapse, and her white and frightened face took on another shade of fear, and, as her tormentor lifted his graceful figure, she cried out in anguish, and turned to the door.

"Stop!" said the voice, that in its forced and unnatural key would haunt her for ever; and again she was powerless to move. "You understand all I have been telling you?" he said, coming up and standing between her and the door.

"No, I don't! I want to go!" cried the child, with hysterical vehemence, darting first on one side and then on the other in her efforts to reach the door.

"See here, my young lady, this won't do," he said, enforcing his declaration by a frown and a stamp of the foot, as he stretched out one white hand and laid it with a vicelike grasp upon her shrinking shoulder. "I repeat, you understand what I have said?"

"Yes, sir," said the child, sobbingly.

"You are never to try that game again."

She shook her head, still cowering.

"Or, remember, the gaol! Now you can go."

"Of course she's an impostor," he said, angrily, when the room was emptied of her presence. And he walked to and fro impatiently, as though pursued by an invisible power. "Nothing easier than that for one of those children to do. They needed but a small memorial—the knowledge of her name for instance—a trinket or so. She was with them a great deal—always a child of such tastes. Flor!" he exclaimed, growing more energetic, as he talked, "she to palm herself off for a thing of beauty like that. This, a scraggy-eyed girl, lean and lantern-jawed; that, a creature of fairy loveliness, hard to be paralleled. Nonsense! I should have been a fool if I had noticed her. I might have given her some money though."

He hurried to the door. Nobody was there but a well-dressed waiting-maid, receiving some orders from beautiful Mrs. Walters, whose room was next door.

"Be sure and let her in when she comes on Christmas," he heard the latter say.

Nobody there, in all the brilliantly-lighted hall; the nuisance had gone. It was not at all likely he would ever meet with it again. So he went back to his cigar and his luxurious quiet.

CHAPTER II.

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,

Thou art not so unkind

As man's ingratitude.

Shakespeare.

The child had no name for that fashionable disaster that happens to so many more favourably situated—a broken heart. There are no words in the language with which to depict the peculiar suffering of such a child. No faith to console, no wisdom to correct—nothing but the ruin of all its beautiful hopes, lying at its feet: its little spirit wounded almost unto death; its weak and ill-nourished body trembling as one in the last mortal pangs of dissolution; everything black, blank, lost!

Her case was yet more wretched. She had no mother to go to in her miserable home; no miserable mother even, who, amidst the fumes of the poisonous liquors she has been imbibing, still has something of the mother's love for her wretched child, and a shoulder on which, maudlin though she may be, she can let the little face fall and sob its piteous grief out in her ear.

"I'll never speak of it again; I'll never tell anybody of it again! They may ask me and ask me—I'll die first!" she kept on, under her breath, as she went slowly down the stairs. "I expect everybody has laughed at me; I know they all have in Poplar Court; but I'll never speak of it again."

She started at this; started, flushed and stood still, frightened at herself. What had she said? Was it a vow that to break would peril her soul? Yes, she believed that. Reverence was one of her redeeming qualities. It was so prominent that, but for counterbalancing traits, it would have made of her nothing but an abject slave, a superstitious puppet. She had retained the memory of her early teaching, terrible as the ordeal of the past three years had been.

"There!" she exclaimed "now I'm bound; now I daren't tell if they tore me in pieces. Well, it's just as well; it couldn't do me any good. My beautiful lady wouldn't believe me, perhaps, any more than the rest of them. They say I'm proud and take on airs, only because I told them the truth, and call me the ragged princess." She stopped to gulp down a great lump that seemed to come up obstinately in her throat, then hurried faster. "And there's poor old gran'pa—I'd forgotten him."

She went quietly across the great hall, quickened her pace at a harsh "be off with you, baggage!" from one of the servants, hastened to the green baize door. Nobody was there. Her heart beat with terror. Had she left this good old man to be ejected from the place, turned into the wet streets with no one to protect him?

A dark and woeful evening it was, crowded with unkindness and neglect and cruelty; but her treatment to her old friend seemed to her the worst thing of all.

She flew to the entrance, sprang down the steps, turned into the arch, and there, with a cry of delight, saw her friend and protector standing patiently in his old place, the woollen bag hanging from his neck, her tambourine in one hand, the other thin and bony fingers held hard against the little treasure under his ragged vest.

"Oh, gran'pa!" cried the child, and leaning her head against him, crying in an agony of grief and joy as if her heart would break.

"Why, child, child!" He patted her on the shoulder. "What's the matter, and where have you been?"

"Oh, gran'pa, never mind." She raised her hand and wiped her streaming eyes with the little faded handkerchief. "I've—I've only been to see somebody, you know—that is, I thought I'd seen him before, but I was—I might have been mistaken. No matter; don't let's talk of it. We will go home and make a good fire—oh, you must be so cold! But it doesn't rain; we won't get wet. We'll—we'll go home and be happy, won't we, gran'pa?"

"Eh, why shouldn't we, child? There's a reason—I see it in your voice. What's happened, eh?"

"Never mind, gran'pa; we'll go home and nobody shall trouble us. Here's my hand. And we'll stay all our days in Poplar Court, won't we? Where I'll be the ragged 'princess,' whether my fortune comes or not. It's a good place—that is, when we have a fire, you know. And this money in your pocket—oh, we shall be happy!"

"The voice, the voice!" mumbled the old man.

"And I hope we shall live a great many years to make each other happy, and then—and then die together!" she cried, with a hysterical effort to keep

her voice even; but it broke down, and the old man muttered:

"Ah, the poor child! the poor child!"

"No, no, you mustn't say that, or I shall be very angry," cried Flor, quite calm again. "I'm not a poor child. Didn't I have some money given to me? and didn't my beautiful lady tell me to call on her at Christmas? and maybe she'll give us a chicken. If she don't we can buy one, just for once, and Mitty Morgan will cook it for us in the great stove. Poor! I'm just as happy!" And the poor child dashed at a new instalment of tears, with a savage purpose that left her eyes red with the blow.

Poplar Court ran from a bye-street at the lower end of the city. Night and day a never-ceasing thunder rumbled in the vicinity, and a never-ending stream of waggons, presided over by swarthy men, toiled along its uneven stones, loaded with enormous boxes and bales and cordage, and whatever the great ships brought from over the sea.

The inhabitants of Poplar Court were low in the social scale, and the narrow, grim houses, crowding each close upon the other, were rich in rags floating from the windows and strung across lines, from shutter to shutter, flapping and writhing and fluttering in the wind.

The presence of a moon, struggling through wide rifts of clouds, enabled little Flor to steer clear of the drifting humanity. It shone upon her quaint little figure, and the tall spare frame of the old fiddler, as they took the middle of the passage and moved onward to the old tenement that ended the court, by stretching its crumbling ribs from side to side, and seeming to uphold all the other houses by its faded assumption of dignity. Presently they had opened the crazy door and propitiated the tottering wooden steps by the most careful movements, Flor going ahead, and the old man following.

"I'll have a light in a minute, gran'pa; there, sit down. I know just where to put my hand on everything."

And with this little assumption of womanly forethought she struck a match, coughed a little as the brimstone ignited, and soon the tallow candle revealed the tidy wretchedness of the apartment.

Flor was down on her knees next, for she had laid all the sticks ready to be set blazing.

"I'm hungry, ain't you, gran'pa? There's bread in the house, and now you're safe I'm going out to get some butter. Come, let's count the money. Not many pennies and little bits to-day, on account of the rain; but that nice roll! You're sure you've got it? Oh, yes, there it is!" she cried, as the old man produced the money.

She drew a chair gravely up to the shaky table, then sat down, leaned her head heavily upon her hand, and forgot everything for a moment, wrapped in her own gloomy thoughts.

"Well, deary, how much?"

The voice of the old man recalled her to consciousness. She caught at the money nervously.

"Five, six, seven—why, gran'pa, we're rich, we surely are rich. Seven, and I haven't done yet!" she exclaimed.

The old man leaned over, fixing his sightless eyes where he supposed the money to be.

"Eight, nine, ten, eleven—why twelve shillings!" cried the child, breathlessly.

And pushing them from her, she sat herself back in the chair, scarcely believing the evidence of her senses.

"Twelve shillings, eh! and Christmas on Monday," ejaculated the old man.

"Was you thinking of a pudding, gran'pa, such as you used to have? You shall have it. Mitty Morgan's to have one, if she can find some one to go halves; for the whole would cost almost half a crown. And we'll buy a chicken—yes, we will—a little one; it will be splendid! A pudding, a chicken, and I to help in the cooking; for Mitty isn't exactly to be trusted, though she is a good cook."

"I was thinking, little one, that you must buy shoes."

"Oh, no matter for me!" cried the girl, tying over her head the much-enduring handkerchief. "I don't care if I never have shoes; what's the use?—I mean, gran'pa, what's the use of anything if—if you're so poor that a little like that won't buy half you want? Now I'm going. Just come and turn the key; there's bad characters in this house, Mitty Morgan says."

The old man fumbled for the rest of the money, and had just placed it snugly in its former resting-place, when there came a rap at the door.

"Well, I'm blessed!" cried a thick voice, as a small figure whisked in, pulling an uncommonly large hat from an uncommonly small head. "I say, I'm blessed if this don't look comfortable. Well, how are you to-night?"

"I'm well enough," was the reply of the old fiddler, who did not fancy his visitor.

"Well and comfortable, I should say so—well and comfortable. Well, she is a treasure of a house-keeper, I should say so. What a very nice thing to have some one to care for you, eh? a fire on the hearth, a singing kettle, and all that sort o' thing, eh?"

"She's a good little girl," echoed the old man.

"Good! She's an angel hopt down, as it were, right into one's mouth, and you're lucky. I'm afraid you ain't thankful," he added, transforming himself into a jug by planting his right hand on his hip.

"What do you want?" asked the old man, rather curiously.

"Oh, what do I want? yes, you wish to know what I want. Well, business is what I want, of course. I never comes but I comes on business, do I? There's a lady—first quality—of my acquaintance that gives a Christmas party to her little girl. She speaks in the hearing of my cousin, and wouters where she will get a fiddler for the dance, which comes off early, and, being old-fashioned, doesn't want a band, nor yet two instruments. So Jimma comes to me, and I says to Jimma, 'Consider old grandpa down in Poplar Court as good as engaged. He'll do it, I know, and glad to turn an honest penny.' How do you like it?"

"Well, I like—it," said the old man, slowly, "though I don't get the first price, if the money goes through your hands."

"Now, that ain't grateful—I say it as a friend—that ain't grateful, old man. Don't I take the pains to mention it, and go out of my way to do it, and knowing fiddling Jimmy, too, who gets first-rate prices? But no, says I to myself, 'Grandpa's slim and genteel-like, and his little lady'll do him some good, and he's blind, and—'"

"And so you took advantage of him," said the old man, bluntly.

"Now, I'll be hanged, if I ever see such a chap! I'll go after the other one. I will."

"Well, I'm willin'," said the old man.

"Suppose we go halves?" queried the other, who had risen, and stood hat in hand.

"If that's the best, you'll do—yes."

"All right, then. In course the little gal'll go with you, you bein' blind, and it'll be good as a play to her—develop her faculties, like."

"Yes, yes, she'll go," said the fiddler.

"Well, good-night, and bless you, bless you," said the man, whose speech grew thicker every moment.

"I'll send the number and the lady's name. Wish you merry Christmas." And away he went, zigzagging down the stairs.

CHAPTER III.

Go to your bosom;

Knock there and ask your heart what it doth

know. Shakespeare.

JOHN HUBERT IVINGTON had bought a house. A handsome house in the suburbs had long been to let, and the owner, despairing of getting interest on his property that way, had determined to sell.

John was a man who did not know he had nerves. He liked the place because it was capable of great improvements. Its situation just suited him—far enough from the road to ensure quiet, near enough to show with imposing distinctness. He got it at a bargain, too, cash down—serpentine walks, statuary, greenhouses and all. It mattered but little to him that the place was said to be unlucky; indeed, it derived an additional charm in his eyes from that fact. The man who had built it quarrelled with his wife. He was overheard by the neighbours swearing at her about the disposition of certain improvements; he was seen sometimes, when the window shades were up, to stamp about the room as if anxious to find somebody to quarrel with; and when madam was found lying dead in her bed, one morning, although there was no existing proof that evil had been done, the people of Boryton considered that she had been foully dealt by, and only expressed their wonder that it didn't happen before, where, one morning some years after, the old man was cut down from a beam dead.

From that time all the inhabitants considered the house doomed, and whoever moved in soon moved out in disgust, having either seen so nothing, or heard something, nobody quite understood what.

John had listened gravely when these things were commented upon, and smiled as the widow in the house adjoining answered his questions with sincere faith in the genuineness of the sights, sounds, or whatever they were, as she handed him the keys every now and then.

John always looked at a younger face, when he smiled—the face of a really beautiful girl of seventeen, the widow's only daughter.

"He seems to take a mighty fancy to you, anyway," said the widow, one day when they had been talking of him.

"I'm sure I hope not; I should not feel at all flattered."

Her mother too ed up amazed.

"Why, Angy, he's handsome, he's remarkably handsome."

"So everybody says—and so, indeed, he is, to those who like that sort of good looks; but there's something under it all, something hard and revengeful—at least, so it seems to me."

"Why, daughter," exclaimed the mild widow, "you can't mean it?"

"Indeed, I do."

"Then how differently folks see! I thought he looked liked a man almost too kind and indulgent; I thought him singularly beautiful. Well, well, there's no accounting for diversities of opinion. Your poor father used to say that I was a very poor judge of character. Perhaps you take after him, for I must say he read men as easily as one reads a book. How nicely he is fitting up the place! You can't deny that he has great taste."

Angy joined her mother at the window that overlooked that part of the estate which was under repair. Nearly a score of workmen were busy at various points, some cleaning walks, others trimming trees, others working upon the house-front itself.

"He seems determined to keep up the acquaintance," said the widow, smiling in a pleased way. "Well, I don't know why he shouldn't. We're his nearest neighbours, and your father held a high position in the legal world. There was not his equal, I believe; but his heart was so good, poor dear! that he couldn't keep money. Well, well, I hope the poor man may never repent of his bargain."

"It seems everybody has who has ever had anything to do with the gloomy old house. I wouldn't live in it, if they gave it to me," said the bright-faced girl, going back to her seat at an opposite window, overlooking her own little flower garden.

"I wouldn't live in it, if they gave it to me." How often, in the years that were to come, would she think of these lightly spoken words, and feel herself powerless to control the fate that seemed even now dawning upon her! Light, careless, happy-hearted, she only saw the future through the sunbeams of her own girlish fancy, which was not quite free from "Love's young dream," childish as she was.

"At last!" said John Ivington, exultingly, standing on the threshold of his elegant drawing-room, surveying its decorations with a pleased though critical interest. "I couldn't have bought such a property as this with twice the money, in any other place in the country. Haunted! nonsense. I'll make it haunted by everything bright and beautiful. I'll haunt it with some of the finest statuary. A group of Faith, Hope and Charity shall stand there. Hem! —I'll make it a present to my wife." And he smiled in a quiet, pleased way. "To my wife; yes, she shall be my wife; her destiny is fixed. Strange, that when I went to that old fortune-teller, she should show me that face, but she did. They say there's a young fellow comes here, pupil of her father, I know; poor as a church mouse, dark and slightly saturnine in face, enough to give him a pleasantly fiendish expression, just the man to interest a pretty girl. But he has come in vain, the young lady is spoken for."

He threw himself down upon a couch covered with velvet, settled his head comfortably upon the carved woodwork, and began to form his plans. Opposite him loomed up the great mirror, a fixture in the wall, that he allowed to remain, while the artisans worked delicately around it. In this could be seen the long, bright perspective of the handsome apartment, velvets, laces, silks and luxurious upholstery. The flowers in the carpet, the frescoes on the ceiling, the fine pictures, the elaborate workmanship of the imported mantelpiece, the costly ornaments above it, the huge silver-branched candelabra, all were reflected with an artistic minuteness that allowed no tint or shade to escape.

"A pretty girl, a beautiful girl, and, by Jove, I love her! I love her, and I will have her! Have not the fates decided it?"

He was gazing languidly at the mirror, when suddenly he saw a man enter from the farther side of the apartment—still in the mirror—and come slowly towards him. He would have turned, but that he knew in that part of the room there was neither door nor window. Besides, the figure was familiar to him—horribly familiar. It was that of a man small and spare in stature, of a remarkably benevolent expression, though at that moment the face wore a look of mingled regret and sternness. Small as it was, and at first it seemed a mere puppet, the features were distinctly marked, and the gray hairs upon the white, benevolent forehead trembled at the little breeze that seemed stirring.

John Ivington gazed like one fascinated or entranced. He was not conscious of being frightened, though a slight chill made him shiver. He felt more

like a man under some spell of curiosity and awe. Then the house was haunted, and yonder was a ghostly mirror.

The thin old man seemed to advance halfway to the centre of the room; there he stood still, and throwing one arm forward, pointed towards a small, misty cloud that could be seen now upon the mirror, as if some one had breathed upon it. Slowly evolving one by one came the outlines of a ship. More rapidly a tempest gathered. The surface of the glass seemed one vast ocean, broken with huge waves that reared their monstrous crests and dashed against the doomed vessel. Evidently the storm was at its height. Crowds of frightened people appeared in groups about the decks—sailors sprang frantically from point to point, in obedience to hoarse orders, that, with the horrid shrieks of the blast, and the cries and prayers of the death-struck, made a hideous pandemonium of sound. Suddenly the ship parted. Those who could swim battled bravely for life. Boats and pieces of spar filled with clinging men and women and children, could be seen in all directions. One immense body of wood held but two, an aged man and a little child.

"We might save the child," cried an old salt, as they rode between huge billows, "but not the other. Does she belong to anyone here?"

"Madness to attempt it," muttered a young man, who sat, white as death, in the stern.

And even in that awful time he thought of the vast fortune that was his if that little child sank under the boiling surf. He forgot his sacred trust, forgot his manhood, and did not cry:

"Save the little one; I am her protector. The debt of gratitude I owe the old man, her father, cannot be repaid."

He held his peace, and suffered the timid and the selfish to have their way.

"The old man was one of the steerage passengers," cried another. "I remember seeing him, the old fiddler. Ha, they are under now!"

"Bear away!" cried the pilot; "there's no time to lose!"

And the young man turned his head with his wicked thought, perhaps daring to excuse himself.

He lived it all over, and grew deadly chill, sitting there before the haunting mirror.

At last he ventured to look round. It was no illusion; there stood the venerable, gentlemanly figure, and though through it could be seen the rich furniture and the opposite wall, still there it was, an accusing presence.

"What am I here for?"

John Ivington had not spoken.

"I am here to remind you of the past, to tell you that you have perjured your soul, but that there is forgiveness for you, if you will be just. I was with you when my helpless little child asked for justice at your hands, and found no mercy in a villain's heart. This splendour, the money that you lavish upon it, rightly belongs to her. I trusted you—too blindly I followed my own impulses. I believed you as honest as myself."

"Did I not take you from poverty and make you as my own? Yes, as my son I educated you, gave you access to the best society, bestowed my confidence upon you—and how have you requited me? I tell you, I will haunt you to death! In all your pleasures I will be beside you; in the silent night you shall see me, and in the glare of mid-day. Every place to which you direct your footsteps shall be haunted, every pleasure you enjoy I will poison! I will stand beside your bridal, I will make desolate your household; I will trouble you while living and dying; you shall not escape me, unless you make full restitution. My little innocent child you have subjected to all the galling restrictions of poverty. You have thrown her amidst the pollutions of a vicious neighbourhood at nearly the age at which I rescued you. You have tortured a little heart that loved you singly and purely; you have taught it to hate and almost to loathe your kind."

"Go and find that child; take her home, educate, clothe and feed her—I ask nothing more. You may keep her for ever dependent upon your bounty. Hide the secret of her birth, if you will, but for the sake of your own honour, don't leave her among those terrible influences!"

"In my life I was quiet and retiring; but my will was iron, and my purpose relentless. I swear to you, I will not let the darling of my old age, the one pledge of my only, early love, suffer through you. And the oath is registered in the high courts of heaven."

And the figure disappeared.

John Ivington arose, guilty, but not repentant. The thing, what was it but a shadow, after all? No one could see it but himself, no other person in the world would or could be cognizant of its presence. Should he, after three years of elegant ease, burden himself with this child? The matter was not to be thought of, not for a moment. The child came up

before him as she looked that night—meagre, thin, ragged and dirty. He sickened at the recollection; his fastidious taste revolted. Besides, he chose to consider her an impostor. She was seen to go down, the waves had closed over her, and this old man and vagrant wished to make money out of their knowledge. Besides, if he took the girl, if indeed, she was rightfully the heiress of all this wealth, would not common gratitude exact a support for the blind old fiddler? The girl would not leave him if he had been her benefactor. Indeed, the whole thing involved so much thought, expense and trouble, that much the best way was to wash his hands of it entirely, and let the shadow do its worst. It was after all only a shadow.

He started to walk down the parlour—a thin hand touched his shoulder, and through broadcloth and lining it felt cold—cold as an icy clod, and sent him thrilling and shivering backward. In vain he strove to shake it off; like a grip of iron it remained, rooting him to the floor. Every pore of his body exuded moisture, and every drop of sweat felt like a ball of ice. In utter agony he opened his lips to say, "I will," when he started to his feet, and, with a look of alarm, gazed down the apartment, and—came to his senses, seeing one of the workmen regarding him curiously.

"I—I was fast asleep, eh?"

"Yes, sir. Excuse me for the liberty, but I wished to consult you previous to going, and shook you by the shoulder, I'm afraid rather roughly."

"Oh, no, no; quite right, I'm very glad you did. It waked me from a troublesome dream."

(To be continued.)

In the will of the late Countess of Londoun, just proved, her ladyship, after desiring that her funeral may be as quiet as possible, goes on to say: "I farther wish my right hand to be cut off and buried in the park at Castle Douington, at the bend of the hill to the Trent, and a small cross of stone over it, with the motto, 'I bide my time.'"

DISCOVERY OF A MERCURY LODGE.—A quicksilver mine is said to have been discovered at Exeter. It appears that a few months ago a few boys discovered some of the metal in the rock, or "shillet" as it is called, forming the bank of the river at Head Weir. It was suggested that the quicksilver had come there by accident, or had been designedly placed there, but a local chemist, named Hare, obtained permission from the town council to excavate the bank, and he has just done so in presence of the surveyor and other persons, and the result is the discovery of a large quantity of the liquid metal. Further operations, however, have been stopped, pending the decision of the town council, who are the owners of the land or river bank.

EXHAUSTION OF THE BRAIN.—Dr. Radcliffe, in his recent Croonian lectures, is reported to have discussed, at much length and very acutely, the subject of brain exhaustion, so common at the present day. After describing the leading symptoms, such as loss of memory, depression of spirits, increased or lessened sleepiness, unusual irritability, epileptiform condition of the nerves, and sometimes transitory coma, he argues against urging the patient to eat heartily, believing that such a practice tends to develop the disease; he equally opposes the training diet system, as generally starving the nerve tissues by excluding hydrocarbons from food; nor should the patient be urged to work more than is natural under the circumstances, nor to rest from headwork—in many cases cerebral exhaustion being intensified by the brain lying fallow. If there is undue sleeplessness, the head should lie low on the pillow, and if undue sleepiness, it should be kept high.

ORIGIN OF GIPSIES.—Charles Leland, in his work on English gipsies, speaks of the race of which they are a part as "the descendants of a vast number of Hindoos, of the primitive tribes of Hindoostan, who were expelled or migrated from that country early in the fourteenth century." The migration probably began earlier, for there are intimations of them as far west as Germany in 1416, and in 1427 a troop of them, numbering a hundred, appeared in Paris, where they gave themselves out as Christian gipsies expelled from Egypt by the Mohammedans. No settled account of their origin is given by the gipsies of any two lands in the old world, but their tradition tends on the whole towards the Egyptian origin which the popular notions of European nations had in general till of late assigned to them. Yet that the Rom or Romal are to be identified with the Dom or Domni caste of Hindoos, allied to the Nats, the real gipsies of India at the present day—the letters D and R being hardly distinguishable in gipsy mouths—is not only attested by the name they give themselves, but borne out by proofs without limit from the study of their speech and of their characteristic customs or habits.



[LORD BRUNTON PROPOSES A TRIP.]

THE DOUBLE BONDAGE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Lost Coronet," "Elgiva," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXIX.

I to thee my love will give,
Never dreaming to deceive
While that life endures;
Nay, and after death, in sooth,
I to thee will keep my truth
As now, when in my May of youth,
This my love assures.

GWENDA'S heart beat high, though she could scarcely have accounted for the tumult of her feelings when she heard the announcement of her guardian's presence at Fern Place.

What was it to her, the betrothed of a marquis's son, the heiress of a splendid fortune, independent, fair and young, whether the lawyer guardian of her destiny chose to pay an unexpected visit to her dwelling?

She reproved herself for the causeless alarm; she stilled forcibly the throbbing of her breath as she walked through the hall, doubting in the interval whether she should ignore any unlooked-for arrival and proceed at once to her dinner toilet, or whether she should act on the information received and go at once to the apartment where she was in all probability awaited.

Pride prevailed over curiosity and alarm. She answered the announcement by a cold inclination of her head in token of comprehension, and then she went on to her apartments and rang the bell for her maid.

"Annie, I believe some one has arrived in my absence," she said as the Abigail commenced her duties. "I had better make a more elaborate dinner dress than usual. What have you laid out for me?" she added, glancing at the articles strewn the sofa and chairs.

"Only your gray silk, Miss Lorraine. I mean the dress trimmed with rose colour and black lace. You said you would wear it out at home," answered the maid, brushing out as she spoke her lady's abundant tresses.

Gwenda gave a peevish start.

"Dear me, you need not hurt me so, Annie. You pull my hair as if my head were a wooden doll's. But I will not wear that dress, it is so frightfully dowdy," she added, with a scornful glance at the elegantly trimmed robe.

"What shall I get out, Miss Gwenda?" was the rather sullen rejoinder.

She had been accustomed to a powerful if veiled control over the heiress's dressing-room and all belonging to it.

"My green velvet," was the decided answer.
"Dear me, Miss Lorraine, that is such a——" began Annie.

But Gwenda sharply silenced her.

"I wish for that dress," she returned, somewhat satirically.

"Indeed, miss," began the woman, eagerly, "I only thought it was rather too imposing just for home, you know, Miss Lorraine."

"Never mind; if I do wish to look awe-striking, what then? It is my pleasure, Annie; and mind that you dress my hair in accordance with the rest of my toilet," she went on. "Make me look as dignified as possible."

The Abigail could scarcely repress a smile.

"Dear me, Miss Lorraine, as if any one could improve you from what nature has made you. You are as beautiful a young lady as I ever had the pleasure to wait upon, I'm sure. But when it comes to a young creature of your age looking like a young matron as it were, it's out of the question, you see," she added, despairingly.

"Even if I were one?" laughed the girl, with a shy blush.

"Well, we hope it won't be long first, of course, Miss Gwenda; and if you are to be a viscountess, and in due time a marchioness, it's only fit you should prepare for it. Only it's so pleasant to see youth look like youth itself, and the time will come when you cannot wear the pretty things that suit you now, miss."

Annie was about right in her philosophy when applied to more things than mere dress and ornaments.

It is unwise indeed to forestall the future when the present is in any case so terribly fleeting in its course.

However, her young lady did not choose to yield, or her reasons were deeper than appeared on the surface.

So the rather matronly costume was donned, and the clustering tresses securely banded round the head, while rich gold ornaments formed the sole enlivening glitter to the grave, heavy robe.

"There—I'm sure you do look like a peeress now, anyway, miss," exclaimed Annie, as she gazed on her handiwork, "to say nothing of a princess, which you might well become so far as good looks are concerned."

She scarcely exaggerated in the flattering eulogium.

Gwenda's passing agitation had to some extent given a reality and womanly dignity to her whole air and mien that her usual girlish vivacity and lightness naturally lacked.

Her lovely complexion was displayed to its full brilliancy by the shade which would have been so trying to a less perfect skin.

The heavy folds of the velvet hung round her perfectly moulded form with an amplitude that gave dignity to its youthful slightness.

And with the classical coiffure, and the severe character of her jewellery, she had certainly rather the princess air alluded to by Annie than the girlish grace and fairylike air of the years she counted.

She paused a moment before she opened the door of the drawing-room.

All was still; and she turned the handle with a slight smile of scorn at her own terror.

All was certainly repressed ere she advanced into the room; and no trace of emotion remained when she walked up to the spot where Mr. Bolton was sitting, carelessly turning over the leaves of a periodical that he had taken up from a table devoted to that sort of literature.

"Ha, my fair ward, how are you? I have taken you by surprise, I fear, but it is part of the privileges that compensate for our arduous duties," he exclaimed, as he took her hand and led her to a chair near the one he had occupied.

"Of course, you must be always welcome," returned Gwenda, with perhaps a somewhat constrained politeness. "But I confess I always associate your coming with some especial business," she added, scarcely controlling the anxious curiosity she felt as to the object of his errand.

"Perhaps you are right," he said, carelessly. "We poor slaves are unable to indulge mere fancies or pleasure in our movements. You are right. It was a matter of business that brought me hither."

Gwenda bowed; she could not dare to speak.

It was very absurd certainly. But yet for her very life she could not repress the idea that some evil tidings—something connected with Bernard and her marriage was in the question.

When did a betrothed girl imagine that there could be any matter unconcerned with her lover who possessed her whole heart and soul and thoughts?

"I see you are somewhat alarmed, Miss Lorraine," resumed the lawyer, with a smile. "Am I so very formidable an ogre, or do you think matters are so doubtful that you need to be suspicious on every unusual event or action?"

"No, no. I am quite sure not. I know that all is honourable and true," she replied. "You would not have deceived me, Mr. Bolton; only you see mine is such a strange life, you cannot wonder if I am a little nervous and silly."

"Silly I am convinced you would never be, Miss

Lorraine," returned the lawyer, kindly, "but it is almost as bad for yourself and for others if you give way to causeless nervousness."

"For what 'others'?" Do you mean Lord Cranmore?" asked Gwenda, her breast panting uncontrollably.

"No, no, not altogether," returned Mr. Bolton, with a shadow of embarrassment that did not escape his young companion's anxious gaze. "I do not mean of course that your betrothed husband is not in the natural course of things more interested than any one in all that concerns you, but still you may affect others by your actions whether for firm dignity or girlish nervousness on any unforeseen event or unexpected suspense and delay."

"Then something has happened! you have something unusual to tell me!" exclaimed the girl, a vermillion flush rushing over her cheeks and giving them a yet more lovely peach-blossom. "Do not wait a moment—please tell me," she continued, hastily.

"My dear Miss Lorraine, there is really nothing to cause all this agitation, though you may perhaps have a little suspense to bear, and need your firm decision to bring everything through the little doubts and tanglements which may possibly ensue," returned Mr. Bolton, in a calm though rather constrained tone that added to the girl's irritation.

"May I claim to know at once? It is my right," she said, haughtily.

"It is not quite so rapidly told," he replied. "And I fear your dinner-bell will interrupt me before it is fully comprehended by you. But the real gist of the business is simply this:

"I have received a document which purports to have been written by the benefactor to whom you are indebted for your wealth. And in pursuance with its provisions your engagement to Lord Cranmore must be solemnized within a certain period or else relinquished, as not meeting the conditions of your heiress-ship."

Gwenda did not flush now.

There was a fading away of the colour which usually bloomed in her cheeks, but her eyes had a proud, indignant flash of impatience in them as she said, quickly:

"Then it seems I am indeed to be a slave, in bondage to an arbitrary will. Is that it, Mr. Bolton?" she asked, sharply.

"That is scarcely a fair way of putting it, Miss Lorraine," he returned, deprecatingly. "I think that when such large benefits have been so gratuitously conferred, when there is so little conditions or hardships attached to the heritage, it is hardly grateful or just to complain, almost without a knowledge of the circumstances, at a very reasonable and perhaps necessary condition."

"No, no, it is not," she exclaimed, angrily. "I would rather throw up the golden chains than be fettered—that have to confess to true and noble hearts that they are distrusted and that I am a slave. It is unbearable," she went on, starting up and pacing the room hurriedly in her feverish indignation.

Mr. Bolton watched her with a curious and half-pitying air.

"And," he said, quietly, "I am afraid, Miss Lorraine, that if you give up your wealth and its conditions you would scarcely accomplish your object. You might be free, certainly, but I suspect it would rather be freedom from every tie and every engagement."

She smiled contemptuously.

"Then you suppose Lord Cranmore is so mean and so base as to relinquish me if I lost my fortune," she said. "I am sorry you should have a nature that can think so ill of others, Mr. Bolton. You cannot comprehend perhaps that there may be true and genuine love that can actually dispense with wealth and marriage settlements?"

"And I argot also, I suppose," replied Mr. Bolton, with a forbearing smile. "I dare say such persons and such love exist, Miss Lorraine, and am sure Lord Cranmore has a very warm and impetuous affection for you."

"But you do not suppose that it is disinterested?" she said, eagerly.

"I had certainly rather be excused from giving any opinion in his especial case, Miss Lorraine," was the calm reply. "However, it is my deliberate advice to you not to forfeit the real for the ideal, and to yield to wiser judgments than your own."

"I will not be tyrannized over to seem unmaidenly and distrustful, Mr. Bolton," she said, proudly. "I hate the very name of any one who could impose arbitrary conditions to his bounty. I am not grateful for such a legacy."

Mr. Bolton was not able to reply, for at the moment the dinner bell rang, and Mrs. Fenton entered the drawing-room.

Perhaps had it been delayed Gwenda's quick ears

might have caught the sound of a deep, groan-like sigh, though from whence it could proceed was a mystery she could not have solved, even had it awakened her attention. It might have almost been a ghostly wail, since no living person could have been in the apartment besides the three who were now quitting it for the dining-room.

But, when the door had closed behind the young heiress and her guardian, there was a rustling behind the heavy curtains that draped the bay windows and the conservatory that descended from some steps at the side of a fernery within the recess. And the next moment a thin, wayworn and poorly dressed man emerged from the shelter and stepped into the apartment.

It was the stranger of the morning's adventure. He stole into the apartment with noiseless and cautious steps, giving an anxious glance around at its partially-lighted recesses.

There was a mournful eagerness in the expression of his eyes that devoured each object with rapid but intense examination. But it was not on the tasteful and luxurious furniture, nor the articles of vertu and girlish elegance and refinement his eyes rested.

He hastened to a distant table, on which were ranged some beautifully-finished photographs in ivory frames and one or two miniatures in velvet cases, mingled with writing materials and a few tiny, curious volumes in rare bindings. He hastily examined each object. One of the little volumes he secreted in his dress, and then he lingered over the miniatures as if hesitating between them and the cabinet-size cartes on the table. But either from choice or from the more portable character of the smaller cases, he seemed to decide on one of the velvet-encased miniatures. And placing it within his wrapping-coat, he gave one last sharp, regretful gaze at each surrounding object, it might almost seem as if giving them a sad farewell as he turned away.

It was certainly scarcely like a robber's proceeding, for there were some trinkets lying on the chimney-piece of far greater value than anything he took away.

Yet he observed secretly and silently these minor articles of small value or cost, and then departed through the windows with a light leap on the turf beneath that might have belittled a far younger man, and without hindrance or detection took his way through the gardens to the park-like grounds which surrounded them and where the darkness would effectually cover his flight.

CHAPTER XXX.

Will Fortune never come with both hands full.
But write her fair words still in fondest letters?
She either gives a stomach-ache and no food—
Such are the poor in health; or else a feast,
And takes away the stomach—such are the rich
That have abundance and enjoy it not.

"SHOLTO, this cannot last. It is wrong—ay, and dangerous for you," said the Countess de Fontane to Lord Saville, as they were once again strolling in the romantic precincts of the chapelle where they had met some week or ten days before.

It seemed as if that spot had some especial charm for them, for each sunny autumn morning, which as it happened that season was of no ordinary frequency, their excursions were generally directed thither, whether by accident or pre-arrangement only themselves, or perhaps Meriton, could tell.

At the moment in question Laura was sitting within one of the sheltered nooks under the chapel walls. The sun just reflected its brightness on her fair, thoughtful face, like a brilliant glory on a portrait. And the soft tones of the chanting within mingled with the sighing of the breeze and the distant hum of the boatmen on the Seine, as they beguiled their slow progress by some favourite national air.

The whole scene was delicious and soothing in its beauty to the happy. But for the troubled hearts of the pair who sat there it had a mournful pensive quality, which was the forerunner perhaps of more tangible griefs.

"I cannot leave you, Laura—at least not alone and unprotected," said Lord Saville, tenderly. "It is the last days of such precious happiness for me; and as your friend, your brother, I will remain till your husband returns to take charge of his treasure. Thank Heaven," he added, "I can meet him without a pang, so far as injuring his honour and breaking his trust is concerned."

Laura gave a melancholy smile.

"True," she returned, "true, Sholto. And you can claim your bride with a free hand, and it may be a loving heart also. I school myself to wish it—to pray for it if such may be, dear Sholto."

"And to forget you, Laura?" he murmured. "No, no—that were impossible! Lady Maud is too young and haughty and thoughtless for me to feel drawn to her as I am attracted to you, my fair, sweet, womanly friend! No; she will be Countess of Saville, and

with all that I can give her to make the position desirable. But that 'all' does not include 'love.'"

There was a silence, only broken by the touching tones of the priest chanting a requiem mass. Laura gave a slight shiver as she listened.

"Do you know," she said, "I believe I shall not be in any one's way, to make their joy or sorrow long? I do not think I shall live long, Sholto! Something tells me my end is not so far distant as my years might warrant me in supposing!" she went on, gently.

"Hush! do not torture me with such morbid fancies, Laura," exclaimed the young man, hastily moving his position to one rather nearer to her, as if to shelter her from the evil she apprehended. "I could bear all save your death!"

"I know not," she said, "I know not; it might be for the best, dear Sholto! There would be no lingering regrets—no living death then. And I should end this weary life, which has had only flashes of most doubtful happiness and so much misery for me!"

The earl could not reply.

He knew full well that there was truth in her words. He knew that she had indeed suffered strange reverses of fortune from her early years. Raymond's sister's treachery—her woman's resentment—the feverish excitement of her married triumphs—the dangerous poisons she had drunk in the love which was still her only sweetness—could never hide a doubtful retrospect and a most gloomy future. He was about to attempt some rather doubtful consolation when the sound of approaching steps was heard, and ere they could even rise from the resting-place which they had chosen a darker shade passed over the sun's light.

A figure advanced with hasty steps to the spot where they stood, which for a moment could not be recognised in the blinding sun between them.

Laura knew the very outline, the attitude, the shadow which it cast upon the turf.

It was Count Albert, and though her knowledge of his peculiar habits made her in a measure prepared for any such sudden emergency, and though she had the full consciousness of innocence to support her in her meeting with her husband, yet a terrible heart-sickness overcame her enfeebled frame.

It was a strong effort to support the faintness that crept over her. She hastily applied an extract bottle in her handkerchief to her nose, ere she rose to her husband's greeting.

"Ha! Laura, my darling, I am indeed thankful to find you thus," said the count, in tones that certainly did not betray any annoyance at the rencontre. "And you, Saville, are most kind to fulfil my duties for me, while you have so many ties of your own to call your thoughts and attentions from any less pressing claims."

It was so like that singular man to greet them thus, or some suspicion might have been aroused as to the sincerity of his address.

But Albert de Fontane was so remarkable a mixture of the Italian and English styles that he might, perhaps, fairly be supposed to defy any ordinary judgment.

There was a straightforward cordiality, combined with southern warmth, in his whole tone and mien in his usual manner to those with whom he was familiar.

And Sholto Saville felt that it was his best policy to accept his kindness at its worth.

"You are too good, count," he said, as carelessly as he could, "and estimate my worthless efforts too highly. It has been a pleasure to be of any use to the countess in your absence. I was astonished to find her alone," he went on, receding from the place he had occupied as if to vacate his post in favour of the count.

But Albert did not accept it.

"Laura, you look certainly improved by the pure air," he said, gazing at the now flushed face of his beautiful wife.

In truth, the countess had fever spots on either cheek, since the faint sickness had passed over.

"Oh, yes, I am well—quite well," said the countess, with a forced smile. "You are right, Albert; the air of Ronen does seem to have done me a great deal of good."

"Yes, when combined with cheerful society and change," continued the count. "It was sure to be beneficial. I suppose you will return to England before very long, Lord Saville?"

"I scarcely know. Perhaps. It all depends upon the success of the business I have to transact," was the reply.

"Exactly so. I am about in the same position myself," observed the count. "The fact is there are some very uncertain interests that are not in the least under my own control, which will affect my stay and movements. And," he added, "I confess if I had not been very anxious about the countess, I am not sure

that I should have made this flying visit, which I am afraid will only be a temporary one."

"So you mean to go back to Paris, then, Albert?" asked the countess, hurriedly.

"I fear so, ma belle. Are you sorry for the possible necessity?" asked the count.

"Yes, yes. I should wish to go with you," she replied, quickly.

"We will see about that later. For myself, I should scarcely recommend it. I found that Paris was very unhealthy just now, and every one is hastening thence," answered the count, lightly.

"Then do not go; let everything wait or take its chance. I wish it—indeed I do, Albert!" returned the countess, earnestly.

It was impossible entirely to doubt her truth. Even Count Albert's face assumed a gentler and softer expression as he gazed upon her.

"Foolish little woman! as if it were a matter of course that I should fall a sacrifice. I am fever-proof, I can assure you; so you need have no apprehensions for me," he said, kindly. "But we need not arrange all these weighty matters just now. We had better return to your apartments, Laura. I hope you find them comfortable."

"Oh, yes, quite. Nothing could be more unexceptionable," she replied.

"Then Merton deserved my confidence. He is young; but still I fancied there was something about him that warranted confidence," returned the count. "So far all is well."

And giving his arm to his wife, he led her away to the carriage, while Lord Saville walked at the side of the husband with a somewhat doubtful and embarrassed mien.

"Of course you will return with us. Do not pay me so bad a compliment as to suppose I frighten you away," said Count Albert, as Lord Saville prepared to take his leave of the pair.

"By no means. The simple fact is, that I feel you and the countess will naturally like to be alone for a time on your first return," said Sholto, rallying his courage to speak with candid firmness. "And I have been very rarely at the apartments of the countess. My chief aim was to encourage her to take the air and the exercise that are essential to health."

"I fully believe I am most indebted to you," was the answer; "and now that I have returned I hope that you will combine the two during our stay here. You must dine with us to-day, at any rate," Sholto hesitated.

Laura's eyes were averted. He could not read her wishes in her face.

And for himself, with the greater self-command of his sex, he felt that it would be a possible and a very desirable feat to utterly dispel any lingering suspicions that might be conceived.

So he carelessly accepted the hospitality and jumped into the carriage after the countess had entered it.

"I hope it is no impertinence to appear cognizant of what seemed to be on every one's lips," resumed the count, when the carriage was fairly in motion.

"It depends what it may be. Of course if it is public news, there can be little wrong in hearing or repeating it," returned Lord Saville.

His face certainly grew hot under the intimation, but he resolutely kept under the annoyance which such an allusion caused, the feverish, glowing wound that it touched, and which vibrated with double sensitiveness under the touch of Laura's husband.

"Well, if it is intended to be a profound secret, it is not for me to speak of it; only that like many other of these mysteries it is whispered about, till echo reverberates it with a hundred tongues," was the reply. "I, for one, would scarcely have thought it worth while to throw any doubt over any event which must soon be patent to the world."

"And therefore perhaps scarcely to be willingly forestalled," returned the earl, with a somewhat forced laugh. "Time enough when the end comes to reveal the paths that lead to it."

Count Albert bowed.

"Well, I shall reserve my congratulations then till the consummation of the agreeable prospect that folks say awaits the fortunate betrothed of a young and lovely peer's daughter," returned the count.

"Only both Laura and I would wish to have time and opportunity to prepare a suitable token of our regard, oh, ma belle?" he added, turning to the countess.

"There would be little difficulty in the choice, were we in your own land, instead of just quitting it," returned Laura, quickly. "However, we must do our best on the occasion, when it arrives."

There was perfect calmness in her look and tone now. The flush of agitated surprise faded into a pale despair, which expected nothing more of hope, and had little concern for the evil which might await in the future.

Lord Saville saw it, but he little dared to notice the change in her manner.

Yet it haunted him for many a long year, in weal or woe, in sickness and health, in danger and in refuge from the storm and the miseries that were to be his portions ere the "end" of which he had spoken came. In a few more minutes, they had reached the apartments of the count, and Laura, on the plea of indisposition and fatigue, retired to her own chamber.

CHAPTER XXXI.

What would I, if I gain the thing I seek?

A dream, a breath, a froth of fleeting joy,

Who buys a moment's mirth to wait a week,

Or sells eternity to get a toy?

For one sweet grape who would the vine destroy,

Or what fond bogar but to touch the crown

Would with the sceptre straight be stricken down?

"MAUD, my dear, how would you like a trip to the Continent, to while away the time till the London season commences?" said Lord Brunton, with a rather constrained smile, looking up from the newspaper he was reading.

The breakfast had just concluded, and the marchioness was busy inspecting some elaborately got up bills of fare, which were presented for her approval, perhaps in anticipation of the coming gaieties of the season.

Lady Maud was petting a beautiful Skye, who was begging for morsels of roll from his mistress, and perhaps the stooping over the little animal might occasion the deep crimson in her cheeks when she raised her head to answer her father's question.

"It is hardly for me to say, papa," she replied, quickly. "Why do you think of such a plan?"

"Oh! I scarcely know. I fancy the Hove is rather dull just now, as Gilbert is gone and Bernard in a fit of the gloom," replied the marquis. "And then, besides, your mother is not so very strong, and I want to brace her up for the fatigues before her."

Lord Brunton gave a rather forced laugh as he nodded to his daughter in explanation of his meaning.

Lady Maud either did not or would not perceive the sign.

"My dear Maud, do look here. Is not this a very extraordinary design?" suddenly interrupted the marchioness, displaying a richly ornamented carte, with a curious imitation of some of Landseer's paintings round it, more especially that of the fox and the small bird, by him crypt "Not caught yet."

Lady Maud gave a faint smile.

"A very bad omen, mamma," she laughed. "Pray reject that—or keep it for poor Gilbert. It may serve as a warning to beware of such dangers as beset Bernard and me."

Lord Brunton gave an impatient cough.

"Maud, dear child," he exclaimed, suddenly, "you have been dutiful and worthy of your race and training hitherto in all that has happened to test your obedience and right spirit. Do not let me think you are giving way now—that you repent the generous frankness of your consent to marry Lord Saville."

Lady Maud's colour varied fitfully while her father spoke.

"Papa, if I am what you believe, if I have in any degree pleased and satisfied you, if I deserve any confidence at your hands, I ask at least truth and candour now."

Lord Brunton gave an uneasy glance at his wife.

"I don't know what you mean, my dear," he said. "Of course all is straightforward as possible now. The weddings are all arranged for the spring, and if you like we shall amuse ourselves on the Continent in the meantime."

Lady Maud's eyes flashed keenly as she tried to read her father's face.

"Papa, do you intend, do you mean that we shall meet—that we shall try to meet—Lord Saville?"

Certainly the marquis had passed the age of blushing, and there should have been no embarrassment in his intercourse with his young and only daughter.

Yet unless Maud was mistaken there was a sudden deepening of his colour, and a twitching of his lips that had something strange and sympathetic in it. He replied:

"Really, my dear, I cannot tell. Your letters from the earl are not very frequent of course, and when we go abroad it is very likely he may have left the spot which he last wrote from. Are you anxious to see him, petite?" he said, with an attempt at playful badinage natural enough where a young fiancée was in question, but that scarcely befitted the circumstances of the case.

Lady Maud did not blush nor drop under the intended jest.

"Papa, I would not, under such circumstances," she said, calmly.

"Under what circumstances?" asked Lord Brunton, with uneasy sharpness.

"Under the contingency of going to hunt up the absent," she answered, firmly.

"Really, Maudie, you are very strange and saucy," was uttered by Lady Brunton in a tone of forced reproach. "It seems to me that at your age there should be a more complete submission and confidence where our will and judgment are in question."

"Mamma," said the girl, proudly, "if I am of age, and if I am to be trusted to make a decision in a far more important event, I do think I have a right to express my wish now. And, if there is any question of disturbing or of pursuing Lord Saville in the interval before our marriage, I will not consent to it," she added firmly.

"Then you really do love, and have perfect faith in him, is it so, my child?" said her father, more tenderly. "That would certainly make me and your mother even more entirely happy in your marriage than at the present idea of your constrained obedience."

Maud's lips curled with some ill-repressed and not very intelligible emotion, and it was a few moments before she replied:

"There can be little idea of love at present, papa, at least not like Bernard's and Gwenda's. However, as to confidence and faith, that is all different. I would not degrade myself by distrusting the man I had promised to marry. From the moment that I consented to obey your will in the matter I was bound by the promise, whether it was a rash one or not."

It was a strange spectacle to behold a young girl, not even yet initiated into the world and its ways, firmly and calmly reproving the implied teachings of her parents.

The whole affair had perhaps too sad and too deep a mystery in it for them to explain fully all they could of their half-spoken fears.

But there could be little doubt as to the noble and candid line of duty which Lady Maud professed to practise; and so the marquis and his wife too plainly felt.

"Come, come, this is all nonsense, my dear child," said Lord Brunton, at length. "What I meant to say was simply this: I shall decidedly not think it necessary to avoid Lord Saville; at the same time it will be very possible we shall not come in any contact with him. It would be very hard," he continued, gaily, "if the whole Continent were to be shut up to us because your future husband happens to be travelling there."

"Well, in any case, we will not give him any clue to our whereabouts," put in Lady Brunton, cheerfully; "that should surely satisfy this precise little monitor. I had no idea Madame Macleane could be so successful in forming the practical element in my gay Maud," she went on to say, kissing her daughter's brow as she spoke.

"Is Bernard to go with us, papa?" asked Lady Maud, thoughtfully, "or Gwenda?"

"Humph—well—no; I do not think it will be at all necessary," returned the marquis. "Bernard has plenty to do in preparing for the degree I wish him to take before he is married. And as to Miss Lorraine," he continued, "I have no idea her guardian would allow the trip from her native country at present. So far as I understand, her residence is to be fixed at Fern Place till she leaves it as a bride."

"And comes here to supply my place," returned Lady Maud, suddenly. "Mamma, you will learn to love her, I am sure!"

Lady Brunton saw the glittering moisture in her daughter's eyes, and her own filled instantly with answering tears.

"My child—no, no. No one can ever fill your place in my heart; least of all this unknown whom Bernard has chosen for his wife!" she exclaimed, impatiently. "Gwenda Lorraine is beautiful, I grant, and she has sufficient wealth to cover some defects. But I can never, never forget that her birth is as yet unknown and obscure. There is little of the true aristocrat in her!" she continued, with a certain accent in her tone and manner which betrayed the bitterness within.

"Dearest mother," returned Lady Maud, calmly, "if Gwenda does but deserve love and confidence as an heiress, she must merit it for herself. Bernard may be misled in his choice, but when once made there should be no doubt or withdrawal. Such wavering is despicable," she pronounced, quickly, as if there were impatient, exciting thoughts in her own breast that gave a feverish impetus to her thoughts and expressions.

"Hush, Maud, hush! It is not for you to reprove even in the very least your mother's superior judgment," interposed the marquis. "And if my life should terminate abruptly, as I sometimes believe

then it shall rest entirely in her hands whether she may elect to welcome her daughter elect with the cordiality and the generous bounty that would await the advent of an unexceptionable bride into the ancient race of Dorrigton!"

Lady Maud scarcely heeded the remainder of the sentence. Her attention was caught by the ominous communication.

"Dearest papa, what can you mean? What fears can you have?" she exclaimed. "Are you ill, and why do you conceal it from your Maud?" she went on, caressingly.

Lord Brunton smiled wanly. "Oh, no—not at all, petite. I am well enough, and have no reason to suppose that I should not weary you all out by my long life. Only, our race are, as a rule, somewhat premature in their deaths; and if such a fate should await me, it would be absurd to dread or ignore it. You would be true to your word, and to your mother—is it not so, my child?" he went on, trustingly.

Lady Maud did not weep. But there was a fixed sadness in her face, all too deep for tears, as she threw herself into her father's arms.

"I am your true child—the daughter of your ancient race," she said, in a voice that she bravely tried to steady, "and whatever engagements I may have taken on myself I will fulfil to the very utmost of my strength and power. But for poor Gwenda—it is all so different. She has no such binding motive. It would crush her to the earth were she to suspect such hesitation as mamma expressed just now."

"Oh, it is but a passing relief, a harmless vent to her natural feelings," laughed the marquis. "Is it not so, Helen? Will you not be quite prepared to accept and to tolerate in all things your new daughter—in all things, remember?"

Lady Brunton was about to reply when the hall bell sounded loudly.

And Lady Maud flew impatiently from the room. She was too thoroughly unnerved to encounter strange eyes, and to enter upon strange subjects.

Scarcely had she disappeared when the servant came in with a card on his silver salver.

"The gentleman wishes to see you at once, my lord," he said, respectfully, standing at ease while the mistress contemplated the name.

"Ah, yes. Well, I suppose I am at liberty for a few minutes," he said, as if any apology was necessary for compliance with a very ordinary demand. "You may show him into the library, Tomkins."

The servant disappeared, and the marquis showed the card to his wife.

"It is Gwenda Lorraine's trustee, guardian—I know not what," he observed, as he held it up to her view.

"Then, well, what do you suppose is his errand?" asked the marchioness, doubtfully.

"Who can tell?" he observed. "Yet it is as well to be prepared for the worst. There seems to be some fatality about these weddings, Helen. I am in grave distrust and alarm about Lord Saville's strange conduct. And while that is in petto I should scarcely like to completely quash Bernard's marriage with one, even as Maud's may be with the other of the futures."

Lady Brunton sighed deeply. "What is on the cards is not for us to say," she remarked. "But, Philip, my husband, at least I would implore one boon at your hands. Do not yield from nervous fear to any unreasonable proposal from this Mr. Bolton. It is in Providence's hands, and it may but overrule the affair for good, if we leave it to its guidance. I like not this marriage with all this mystery, and if it is Heaven's pleasure to break it, I will only rejoice in the providence."

(To be continued.)

DR. LIVINGSTONE'S large "Diary," which Mr. Stanley brought with him, sealed, from Africa, and placed in the hands of the great explorer's family, is now in the possession of Mr. Murray, of Albemarle-street.

The death at Naples is announced of Prince Diego Fignatelli, at the age of ninety-two. The deceased, who had been blind for the last thirty years, was formerly attached to the Court of Ferdinand I., and followed the prince to Sicily. In 1815 he was sent on a mission to the Congress of Vienna.

THE VISIT OF THE EMPEROR ALEXANDER.—The Czar will attend the Grand Duchess Vjera's wedding, and proceed via Darmstadt to Holland on the 11th May. He will then take ship for England at Vlissingen on the following day, crossing over in his private steam yacht, and may be expected at Gravesend at about 7.30 a.m. He intends staying in England till the 20th of May. His Majesty proposes to return by the same way, reaching Vlissingen early on the 21st, and Ems the same evening at five. After completing the prescribed course of the waters

at Ems His Majesty will, on the 13th of June, proceed on a visit to Castle Jüchenheim, where he will remain till the 26th of June, when it is his intention to return straight to Tsarskoe Selo. The Corporation of London has determined to invite Her Majesty the Queen to the banquet which will be given to the Czar during his sojourn in London. This incident will, it is believed, enlist the attention of the Cabinet.

THE BLENKARNE INHERITANCE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"Miss Arlingcourt's Will," "The Ebony Casket,"
"The Secret of Schwarzenburg," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHEN Frank Osborne fully realized the fact that from every part of his beautiful room the views of Blenkarne Terrace were equally distinct and obtrusive, he felt overcome by a disagreeable, eerie sensation very much like fear.

Lady Blenkarne had said he was to find relaxation and escape from the gloomy influences of the Terrace in these beautiful rooms.

He came in time to question if Blenkarne Terrace did not haunt them as remorselessly as the most persistent ghost.

Seeing the annoyance of his visitor, he went to the window, and looked for a shade curtain. There was none provided. Then he threw up the sash, and leaned out to find an outer shelter. Those also had been removed. He sat down again, perplexedly questioning the meaning of what was evidently a palpable design of some sort. He finally surmounted the difficulty by inviting the gentleman into the smaller room, where he had noticed a tray with flask and glasses.

Here Colonel Blenkarne rallied from his abstraction, and proposed that Frank should accompany them upon a little expedition they had planned for the afternoon—a visit to a neighbouring ruin and grotto.

Captain Vansittart did not look so well pleased with the idea as the young gentleman himself, when the latter promptly accepted.

The young men were each instinctively aware of a secret antagonism, but concealed their dislike under a smiling courtesy of manner.

Captain Vansittart therefore came forward with gracious aspect with the others when Frank rode up to the cottage, and found the ladies just seating themselves in the vehicle, which was hired for the occasion from an adjacent livery stable, a piece of extravagance only indulged in since the new hopes raised by the East Indian letter.

Aubrey was to ride on horseback and keep Frank company.

The animal was an indifferent specimen, and could scarcely keep pace with the spirited thoroughbred from the Blenkarne stables, and Frank saw his companion glance at him enviously.

"Try the chestnut a little while," suggested he. "I don't believe you are well mounted. These livery men will impose upon you if they can."

Aubrey glanced around hastily in the direction of the carriage, and then answered, hotly:

"Do you think I am not aware that the horse belongs to Blenkarne Terrace? My dear sir, I would hardly mount it while it was that woman's property, though it would carry me straight to a fortune, or to the Blenkarne emeralds themselves. My sister told me the truth, and I agreed with her, that while your accidental position in that place ought not to prevent a renewal of our friendly acquaintance, it would be wise to conceal the circumstance from my mother, and that I ignore it altogether in our conversation."

"You ought to be the best judge. I know nothing of the circumstances," returned Frank, gravely. "I have purposely refrained from making any inquiries, waiting rather for the confidence to be given to me voluntarily on either side. Perhaps, in justice to her ladyship, I should also say that although I am pretty certain she is fully aware of my acquaintance with this family, she has never questioned me in any way concerning you, nor mentioned your names, nor signified any disapproval in the matter. And that I have only found her a kind and generous patroness. So much, perhaps, had best be said."

"So much, and there the subject can be dropped; for this kind and generous friend of yours is a bitter, implacable, silent-working foe to every one of us," replied Aubrey, "and it will only sow discord in our own friendship to harp upon the frayed string. Let us try to act and talk as if such a person did not exist in our little world. Ride on ahead, and ease a little of the superfluous spirit of your steed; then turn back and meet me, and we may keep them together in rather more respectable shape. I will dally by the carriage, and point out to Captain Vansittart

the few landmarks of the way. Fortunately for me the ride is the smallest feature of our day's pleasuring. The lovely walks about the old abbey, and the wonderful lunch in the ruins, which Jones and Margery have gone on to prepare, are supposed to be the chief attraction for us."

Frank secretly agreed to this remark. The walks and the interviews thus permitted would indeed hold greater charm for him. But he queried ruefully would Captain Vansittart still monopolize the gentle Ethel?

That gentleman was certainly favourable to the idea, and, when they had reached their destination, and were sitting on the fallen columns in a wild, deserted courtyard, looking down upon a wide and lovely landscape, he placed himself familiarly at her feet, and began playing with the ribbon strings of her hat.

Madame Roscoe, who was throned in state on the huge granite pedestal from which some giant statue had been deposed, smiled good humouredly upon the little display of gallantry; but Ethel's cool cheek crimsoned, and there was a look of annoyance and restraint on her face very evident to her uncle, who knew her best and loved her most unselfishly and devotedly.

"Ethel, dear, come and tell me what plant this is I find threading its insidious way among the stones, and lifting some of them out of position, I do believe," he called.

And Ethel, with glad alacrity, sprang up and joined him, and hung on his arm for half an hour as if afraid to leave it.

Madame Roscoe did her best to make amends to their young visitor. She fairly overwhelmed him with flattering attentions, and, laughing as gaily as a young girl, led him over to an unroofed building, where, years and years back, she had been the petted queen of a mock tournament that had been the talk of the whole county.

"Ah, those were the days when to be a Blenkarne was to have sure passport into the best society," she concluded, after describing in lengthy and extravagant terms the long past scene of triumph. "When the wit and fashion of the whole town followed my lead, when I was the ruler of society, and no luxury was counted too extravagant to gratify my wildest caprice. Alas, alas! if I had known then I should live in retirement and poverty at the Manor House, which my servants occupied—if I had dreamed that I should come here again in a hired carriage, counting it a festival and rare treat!"

Her tone was filled with bitterness and contempt; the angry tears rose to her eyes, and she looked wistfully into her companion's face for his sympathy and condolence.

He did not in the least comprehend her weak distress, but he bowed and smiled blandly, and then stammered out:

"I must confess my great surprise to find you in such reduced circumstances. I don't believe General Vansittart looked for it either, but he insists that when his son—when I, you know—marry Miss Ethel, it will all be right. And wealth and fortune will again smile upon the family."

"Yes, I read his letter to Colonel Blenkarne. I could wish it to be more explicit, but we are all convinced of its hidden meaning. He has found the treasure—the wonderful mythical treasure that belongs to us, that even Sir Ralph's cruel will gave to us."

"The treasure!" repeated the false Captain Vansittart, his black eyes sparkling greedily.

"Ah, I forgot you are ignorant of it, and my brother cautioned me against talking about it to you, until there comes a letter back in answer to the one he sent off to General Vansittart the very day you brought his."

"I am looking every day for one myself," he returned. "I know that it will urge me to hasten the marriage, if there is to be one. Colonel Blenkarne is afraid of my being too abrupt, and has cautioned me so much against startling Miss Ethel that I have not ventured a word to her. But, dear madam, will you not help me? I am afraid I do not understand English young ladies very well. If she knows the family reasons for the marriage would not that settle the question?"

"It ought to—it must," said Madame Roscoe, thoughtfully, and speaking more to herself than to him. "Ethel is a very peculiar girl, as unlike me as possible, but she must see it as we all do."

"Pray, then, let us have it settled immediately, and then, you know, he promises us the great treasure."

And here the speaker twisted together, with that queer, sinuous motion, those slender, white, supple fingers of his.

Madame Roscoe's eyes shone with something of the same greedy light.

"Oh, can I trust myself to believe it?" she mur-

mured. "Shall I really see myself surrounded with grandeur and wealth once more before I die? Shall I again take a leader's position and enjoy the society for which my nature and birth alike fit me?"

"Will you speak to your daughter, madam?" persisted her companion.

"Certainly I will," answered the lady, resolutely; "we will all speak to her."

Meantime at that very moment Colonel Blenkarne was looking down tenderly in Ethel's face, and saying:

"You have not told me yet what you think of our new acquaintance, dear Ethel. I am quite interested to know your opinion, and exceedingly anxious that it shall be a favourable one."

A little wave of colour swept over Ethel's fair cheeks, and her eyes fell shyly.

"Why, of course I find him pleasant. How should I fail to do so, having so narrow and meagre an acquaintance with other gentlemen? He seems to be not only a person of wide experience and careful culture, but also a right-minded and chivalrous gentleman."

The colonel's face showed his satisfaction and delight.

"My dear Ethel, I cannot tell how much your words have gratified me. We are all so extremely anxious that this union should take place. It is indeed the saving and salvation of all. Aubrey, your mother and myself have all hung tremblingly upon the glorious hope held out to us, hardly daring to believe it would be verified. And now if you are pleased with him, all the difficulty is smoothed away. Dear, dear girl! how happy you will make us! Aubrey—poor fellow! it will lift away the load of despair from his heart. You have never guessed his secret, I suspect, but I have had my surmises this long time, and they are verified now. You will make everything right for all of us. Ah, I am so relieved to find that you find him agreeable!"

Ethel's face had grown rosier and rosier, though she lifted her deep, soft eyes to his full of surprise and wonder.

"But, my dear uncle, I do not understand you exactly. How can you foresee so much from this brief acquaintance? How can you think he has any other thought than that of friendly but common interest in us? How can any of us anticipate his intentions?"

"My dear girl, he has spoken to us freely from the first, and wanted to speak with you, but I was afraid to have you startled. That is what General Vansittant sent him from Calcutta for—to marry the heiress on the other line, and bestow upon us all the great fortune. Yes, I am convinced the more I think about it that it is the long-lost treasure he has found—the priceless Blenkarne emeralds."

In his eagerness he did not see the sweet face pale suddenly, and a look of startled terror dilate those beseeching eyes.

She saw the mistake she had made. For her there was but one new acquaintance; but he was talking about Captain Vansittant. She was cold and faint for a moment with a giddy foreboding, and could not speak. So she let him run on:

"Ah, my darling, will it not be a glorious sight to see you and Aubrey emerging from this humble retirement to show the world that forgets your existence now how there are still worthy scions of the Blenkarne family left—two as fair and noble representatives as the old line has ever boasted, though the name and title has been wrested from them?"

"Uncle Guy," interrupted Ethel, a little huskiness in her sweet voice, "please talk more plainly if you talk at all. I don't think I quite understand your meaning. Do you wish me to understand that—that Captain Vansittant wishes to marry me?"

"Why, yes, I thought you knew it," he returned. "You said you were pleased with him."

Poor Ethel winced, and was made aware that there was some Blenkarne pride in her nature by the fierce throb of relief that her true meaning had escaped his recognition.

"One may be pleased with a gentleman and not be willing to marry him, I suppose," she answered, with a forced laugh. "But since you have begun the subject in such a business fashion, let us continue in the same style. It seems you and mamma and Aubrey have been plotting against me, and are all more than favourable to the arrangement—delighted with it. Now, if you please, state the advantages to ensue from it."

She stood with one hand resting caressingly on his shoulder, but her face turned so she could not read his grave, pained look.

"What a business little woman!" laughed her uncle. "Why, I hardly know how to commence, the advantages are so many and so varied. Perhaps I could not do better than show what Ralph says about it."

As he spoke he took out General Vansittant's letter,

and laid it in her hand. She read it through slowly, evidently weighing every word.

"I think you are right; this good fortune which is to come with the marriage," Here she hid her shudder with another nervous laugh. "This fortune cannot be out of General Vansittant's private resources, but in some way belongs rightfully to the two branches of the family. That is very clearly the reason why the union is desired. If it should prove to be really the famous but hitherto mythical emeralds, why not the value be divided, and leave us all enough for competence, with our freedom?"

He did not hear the pathetic pleading in the voice, or he would not have answered so impatiently.

"Why, child, that is a question only to be asked of Sir Ralph. Don't you see we are the obliged party? We know nothing of the emeralds or their hiding-place. The conditions, as well as the gift, comes from this side."

"I have seen something different in mamma—this explains it," murmured little Ethel. "This new hope has made her very happy."

"And given her new life," he returned, eagerly. "Did you hear her laugh just now? I declare it sounded like her girlish days. It has certainly renewed her youth, and I'm not sure but her beauty also. Her cheeks have a soft glow, and her eyes are as bright almost as yours, my pet."

Alas! Ethel's were not very brilliant at that moment. A hazy mist and a gloomy shadow brooded over them.

"Yes," she murmured, softly. "I knew it would be like renewing her youth. She has always pined and grieved for the luxuries I care so little about. But Aubrey, what were you saying about Aubrey?"

"I ought to leave him to confess to you himself. But it was only by adroit management that I got out of him enough to give the outlines of his story. I have penetrated the secret of his gravity and melancholy. That beautiful little fairy has won away the heart of her staid teacher. Aubrey is desperately in love with the great banker's heiress, and I have my shrewd surmises that his affection is returned, only the haughty fellow knows better than to offer so presumptuous a proposal in his present humble condition. The very rapture with which he hailed this hope showed me how keen had been the sufferings he had concealed from all of us. But you will make everything happy and beautiful, as you have always soothed and cheered and smoothed our troubles away, precious little Ethel! Ah, it is such a relief to know you are pleased with him. I was tormented with a fear of your finding him distasteful!"

"Don't let us talk any more about it to day. I want to think it over quietly," she faltered.

"Yes, that is your way—your quaint, sweet, womanly way. Well, no one shall hinder you. Go down the path there, and sit down alone. I will join your mother and the others. Do hear her laugh? Why, pet, she will outdo you, I verily believe, when she comes again into gay society."

Ethel went down the designated path only too thankful to escape observation, and when she had lost sight of the party by the ruins she sat down on a rock there and, folding her hands listlessly, stared off into the distance. She did not see the lovely alternation of green meadow and shady wood and winding street and sparkling river and clustering roofs of town and village which made up the picturesque view, nor yet the clear blue sky, with marshalled lines of snowy cloudlets, though her eyes wandered restlessly over all.

Only one sickening sight confronted her—the face of this stranger who presented such a claim and who must be answered one way or another. It was a cruel position for the girl. Her heart ached pitifully over it. They were all of them rejoicing at the brilliant prospect of their own fulfilled longings. Had they no fear for her happiness? And what would they say if she could not bring herself to such a sacrifice?

Her face grew sadder and sadder, and her head drooped lower to the clasping hand.

Frank Osborne slipped away from the others, and found her sitting thus.

He hurried forward, struck with consternation.

"What has happened? My dear Miss Roscoe, I am sure something has occurred to distress you. You have not fallen and hurt yourself, I hope?"

A startled look swept away the sadness, and she managed to say, composedly:

"Oh, no, nothing of the sort. I sat down here, you see, and lost myself in a reverie. Did I look so very tragic?"

"Very much so, indeed. It made my heart ache the moment my eye fell upon you," said he, earnestly.

She coloured faintly and rose to her feet, and made little perturbed snatches at the flowers and shrubs about her before she returned:

"I thank you for your sympathy. Perhaps, after

all, I needed it. It was facing a fancied vicissitude and sometimes imaginary troubles are as hard to conquer as real ones."

"I do not doubt it. I suspect, after all, that the resolute facing of any threatening disaster is the real moment of victory. I found it so in my own case."

"And you have fought your battles too?" she questioned.

"One at least, and a sharp one it promised to be. Nevertheless, at the first onslaught all the spectres vanished," he answered.

"I should like to hear about it," she said, still dreamily.

"Let us walk down the path then, and I will tell you all about it. It will explain to you, likewise, how I came here in my present position, and I should like you to know about that."

And as they walked slowly downward he told the story of his blighted heirship, and concluded, merrily:

"Well it was tilting against a windmill in the old fashion. The danger was all of my own imagining. I thought it such a terrible thing to be driven out of plenty and ease, and, lo! I have never been so happy in my life as during these weeks of my first real effort and independence."

"I never cared for riches on my own account," sighed Ethel, softly. "It seems cruel that I must be sacrificed then for—"

Here she paused abruptly, conscious that she was speaking her thoughts aloud, and stood in confusion, with downcast eyes and crimson cheeks, while Frank looked over to her wistfully.

"Ha, he, he! ho, ho, ho! A pair of sentimental lovers!" cackled a shrill, cracked voice.

Both started as if they had received a blow, and, looking around, beheld a strange figure—a withered, wizened, extremely aged woman, wrapped up on that pleasant day in a long black velvet cloak, with a huge black silk bonnet on her head, from out which her parchment-like face looked forth like a mummy's from its wrappings, except for the sharp, restless, jet-black eyes.

She was seated in an ancient-looking carriage, whose door was flung open, and was leaning forward, her two hands clasped over the gold head of a stout ebony case, looking at them intently.

They had come upon the carriage thus unexpectedly because it seemed to be halting—to rest the horses, perhaps—and no sound had come from either the rusty-looking old coachman or his singular mistress until she had spoken thus jeeringly.

As Frank Osborne took a step forward, she muttered, with an indignant glance:

"So I was not wrong—it is the tutor. What is he doing here, and with this girl, whom I recognize at once as one of the hated race?"

The next moment she changed her manner, and said, in a coaxing voice:

"Come here, my gallant lad and pretty lassie, and I will tell your fortunes. I am a famous seer, travelled from far countries. Come here, and let me tell your fortunes."

"Why not?" exclaimed Frank, in a low voice. "It will serve to entertain us. The poor old creature evidently did not intend to be disrespectful. Let us go, Miss Roscoe."

Ethel yielded after a single moment's hesitation, and approached the carriage.

Frank pulled out some silver, but the old woman waved it back authoritatively.

"I take no money for my fortunes. Let me have your hand, and see what is written there. Yours first, that we may give the lady time to recover her composure."

She took his warm, healthy hand into her cold, clammy fingers, and glanced over the palm hurriedly; then lifted her eyes to his face, and never moved them until she had finished.

"You have had a fair and prosperous life till lately. Then there is a short turn, which shows that loss and disappointment threaten you. You bear it bravely. Now you come to a new and very peculiar experience. Don't you find your pupil wonderfully interesting? Humph! the brightest of all fortunes awaits for you, if you have art and inclination. My lady is not young, but she is beautiful still, and charming and fascinating in her manners. Win her—win her!"

She dropped his hand, leaving him uncertain whether to be indignant or amused, and reached out those bony fingers for that of Ethel.

The latter felt a cold shiver creeping up her arm the moment she was conscious of the clammy touch. The face of the old woman seemed to change also; the thin lips clenched together in a fierce grip—an angry flame burnt in the eerie eyes.

"Woe!" hissed she. "There is nothing but woe in the lines here. First, the secret affection you cherish is to be blighted. There is not a single chance

of your winning his love or his hand. He belongs to another. Mark it well. Then every joy you hope to grasp will fly away at the very touch. You belong to a doomed race. A curse is upon you, every one! Calamity will hunt you down! Misery will—"

"Hush! In Heaven's name why do you seek to frighten her with such hateful falsehoods?" cried Frank, seizing upon Ethel's hand and tearing it out of the cruel grasp. "Cease your jugglery! Come, Miss Roscoe, let us return to our party. Do not heed such insane ravings."

The woman laughed long and loud.

Frank drew the little hand tenderly through his arm, and led her away, pained to see how pale she had grown.

"Don't look so distressed," he said, entreatingly; "it was only the idle vagary of a wicked-tempered woman. I shall never forgive myself for having proposed such an absurd thing as yielding to her request. Dear Miss Roscoe, I shall laugh at you if you give any heed to her ravings."

Ethel tried to smile, but the fierce and unexpected attack of the old woman had destroyed the little self-command she had been able to retain after her uncle's revelation. She did her best to keep calm, but ended by a sudden burst of tears.

"The spiteful old idiot!" exclaimed Frank, wrathfully. "I have a mind to go back and read a fortune for herself. Please, Miss Ethel, see how absurd it is for you to heed it."

(To be continued.)

JOSEPHINE BEAUVILLIERS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Lady Juliette's Secret," "The Rose of Kemdale," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XIX.

I built my soul a lordly pleasure house,
Wherein at ease for aye to dwell.

I said, "Oh, soul, make merry and carouse,
Dear soul, for all is well." *Tennyson.*

JOSEPHINE BEAUVILLIERS and the Lady Vengea continued to travel at the same rapid and headlong pace for many hours. Once they stopped to change horses—it seemed at some country hotel—and then Josephine would fain have thrown herself upon the compassion of the bystanders, the busy people whose voices she heard outside, for she had an instinctive terror of her companion—something which whispered to her that Lady Vengea's was an unholy influence. At the risk even of offending her father she would like to have made good her escape from the clutches of this person. But the Lady Vengea kept the blinds of the carriage down—nay, more than that, she clutched the slight arm of the young girl with a fierce and angry grip.

"Dare not to stir!" she said. "I should make no more ado of stabbing you to the heart, if you did, than I should of waving my pocket-handkerchief at you."

"Madam," cried Josephine, "do you think nothing then of murder?"

"Not where necessity warrants," retorted the old lady, "and where it is done to effect good. It would be far better that I should kill you than that I should permit you to escape to Northwick St. John's, and there to fall into the power of that graceless young man, who is so soon to marry his hunchback. Ah! they are putting the horses into the carriage now; we shall be off again in a few minutes. Sit still, you have nothing to fear. Stay"—and the old lady bent forward towards a pouch in the carriage; from this she drew forth a sort of ebony box, a silver flask and a small gold cup.

The ebony box contained some delicate cakes and confections, the silver flask was filled with strong, sweet cordial, of peculiar and delicious flavour.

The old lady filled the golden cup from the silver flask, and she commanded Josephine to partake of the cordial and of the cakes.

"This will strengthen you, put new life and hope into you," said the weird lady, with flashing eyes. "You need not be afraid that I am about to poison you, see"—and Lady Vengea herself quaffed heartily from the golden cup, then handing it again to Josephine after she had rottled it, she said:

"Come, drink, drink!"

And Josephine drank some of the cordial and ate some of the cake.

After that the ostler ran away from the horses' heads, and the carriage rolled on once more at a headlong speed.

Josephine was silent. Soon fatigue overcame her, and she slept profoundly. Hours passed.

When she awoke again Lady Vengea had drawn up the blinds of the carriage, and Josephine perceived that it was passing through a wild and mountainous country.

A drizzling rain and low clouds shut out much of the landscape, but anything more dreary, more desolate, more cheerless, it would be utterly impossible to imagine.

Northwick St. John's is situated in a northern county; the county abounds in mountains, moors, and desolate wastes—beautiful enough in summer time, when carpeted with purple heather and decked with golden gorse, when far-off tracts of rich country could be seen blinding out in the distance with the gorgeous hues of the crimson sunset sky or lying out in the full bright glitter of the morning like an earthly paradise smiling a welcome to the blue heavens.

But in winter, mist and rain shut out the bewitching glories of the distance, and all that is near is bleak and bare and ugly, seen under the influence of the wretched climate of England during the dark months of the year.

Josephine, looking out upon the melancholy mountains, felt her eyes fill with tears, which rained into her lap.

Meanwhile the Lady Vengea coiled up into a corner of the luxurious carriage, appeared to sleep—her face was hidden, but her breathing was deep and regular.

"Terrible old woman," thought Josephine. "Where is she leading me to? I hardly venture to hope that I shall ever escape alive out of her hands."

Presently the carriage came to a full stop.

Through the mist and rain Josephine perceived tall iron gates, with stone lions ornamenting the pedestals on either side.

The footman descended from his perch, and presently a loud, clamorous bell went pealing and echoing through the thick atmosphere.

Old Lady Vengea started up, wide awake, rubbed her eyes, and smiled her grim smile.

"We are arrived," she said. "We are at home. This will be your home for a long time, and a very happy home, too, if you choose; it all depends on yourself, everything."

The gates now fell back, and the carriage passed between them. It continued now for about a mile to pass under a fine old avenue of chestnuts, whose branches met overhead. These trees were of course now utterly bare, but it was easy to perceive what temples of verdure and beauty they would become in two months more.

Presently the carriage emerged from the avenue, and drove round a large flat lawn, which lay in front of a great, gray-turreted house.

"Tempestcloud Castle," said Lady Vengea, nodding her head at Josephine. "My house, and I hope you will like it. The windows in this great house are mostly small and diamond-paned."

The footman descended again from his perch, let down the steps, and assisted Josephine to alight. She hurried under the porch, for it was raining in torrents, and Lady Vengea followed her. The hall-door opened, and admitted them into a vast hall. It was flagged with stone, but comfortably carpeted, and a splendid fire burnt in the large grate. Several chairs and couches were drawn in front of the blaze. Lady Vengea took the arm of Josephine and led her towards the warmth of the ruddy glow.

"Welcome," she said, in her clear, haughty tones. "Welcome to Tempestcloud Castle. If you are obedient you may in time reign here as a queen; if you are not obedient,"—here Lady Vengea clasped her hands and raised her eyes towards the lofty groined ceiling, "death!"

Josephine shuddered. It was strange the power, law-defying, insolent and wicked, which the Lady Vengea so readily assumed. Who was she that could thus deal and threaten death in a Christian country like England, governed by a good queen and honourable constitution?

A crowd of servants came trotting in from the different doors which opened on the hall. These servants were all in a rich livery of gold and blue—they formed a suite almost like one appertaining to a royal household. Josephine was much surprised to hear them enter at once into conversation with their mistress, with a species of respectful familiarity; but Josephine understood not a word that they spoke; the language which they used was peculiar and sourous, and she was not wrong in setting it down to be a dialect of the Russian. Lady Vengea spoke the same language very rapidly, with great force and emphasis. She seemed to give them various directions, and after a while they began to spread a long table with a snowy cloth. Then they carried in a breakfast, several cold joints, cold game, hot chops of mutton, cutlets of veal, fried fish, coffee, chocolate, tea, French rolls, and delicate hot buttered cakes. Everything was in that rich profusion which some fastidious townbred dames might term, unjustly enough, a vulgar plenty; for there was nothing really vulgar in this abundant breakfast which was served at Tempestcloud Castle. It resembled rather

those old baronial repasts in mediæval times, when baron and dame, squire, damsel, page, and vassal, all sat down to the same social board. Silver dishes and covers seemed as plentiful at Tempestcloud as china-ware in the houses of the middle-class gentry at Northwick St. John's.

Josephine looked about her in amazement. The old hall was hung with valuable tapestry; there was an air of solid magnificence and old-fashioned splendour about the weird lady herself—her dress, her jewels, her dwelling-house, her servants, which made the young girl almost doubt the evidence of her senses. She had read of such old baronial mansions, she had seen paintings of such massive halls, and abundantly served repasts; but everything that had happened since the fall of the Dalby's seemed positively too wonderful to be true.

When breakfast was over Lady Vengea rose up and extended her hand to Josephine.

"If you do all that I tell you," she said, "you will be a very happy girl, and some day you will be a very great lady. Come with me now, and I will show you the suite of apartments which I have appropriated for your use."

Josephine accordingly followed Lady Vengea all across the great hall, and into a large drawing-room furnished in blue satin and silver. Great windows of immense sheet-glass opened upon a flower garden, which must have been gorgeous and beautiful in summer time.

Now, under the influence of the bleak March rains, it looked dreary enough and Josephine was glad to turn her eyes to the walls, where hung exquisite paintings, charming landscapes by Cyp and Ruysdael, and warm pictures of Spanish life by Elty. A blazing fire burnt in the polished grate, Dresden shepherdesses and vases of Sevres adorned the marble mantelpiece. But Lady Vengea hurried Josephine from this drawing-room and led her into another still more splendid, where everything was in the richest green velvet, heavily fringed with gold. The furniture was of polished ebony, inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Many of the ornaments upon the tables and chifferonières were exquisitely chased and of solid gold. Lady Vengea smiled grimly, yet almost kindly, when she saw the surprise with which Josephine regarded all this regal magnificence.

"Yes," she said, "I have plenty of money. I think my house is as handsomely furnished as their fine place at Stoneleigh Priory. Should you like to be my heiress, little Josephine? Should you like to inherit all the wealth of the rich Russian widow? Well, you may do so if you like, and you may do more. You may share the wealth of a great Russian yourself before you inherit Tempestcloud. Had yonder graceless soldier, to whom you have lost your heart, been faithful to you, there would have been no need for him to sell himself to his hunchback. I was watching him. I have watched him for a long time, and, had he been true, I should have loved him. There was a time, while he was struggling with pride and hateful family prejudice, struggling manfully, that he loved you, Josephine. Little did you think, either of you, that you were under the watchful eyes of a friend. He came out of that struggle victorious. No; his proud, foolish father plunged all his family into ruin, and to save them from this ruin the young idiot goes and sells himself to the hunchback. Instead of selling himself to labour, instead of devoting himself heart and soul as a noble soldier in the battle of life, he goes and sells himself to luxury, he becomes the bondsman of a vile creature who deserves the halter as much as any trembling convict whose days are numb red and who lies chained in some dark cell at Newgate."

Lady Vengea's eyes flashed fire; she clutched her teeth and her hands; she looked like some ancient prophetess pronouncing a malediction upon her enemies. She trembled from head to foot; she grew livid; she stamped upon the velvet carpet.

"When Chatteris went over to that side," she said, waving her finger, "I vowed to persecute him to the death; my kindness turned to gall, my love to hatred. Had he been faithful to you, had he asked you to wait for the time when fortune should favour his brave efforts, had he gone out into the world to work, then would I have come forward as his great friend and benefactress. I would have given him gold wherewith to buy back Merton Court. I would have given him your hand and dowered him richly."

Josephine flushed, and then turned pale; her heart beat fast. What happiness had been just within her grasp, and she had lost it! Lady Vengea looked at her and shook her head.

"Ah!" she said, "what is done cannot be undone. The lips which have once pressed the brow of the hunchback shall never press yours; or, if they do, and with your consent, girl, I will annihilate you."

And Lady Vengea looked terrific.

"Now I have other plans for you, Josephine, other plans, other plans."

She repeated the words in a dull, monotonous voice.

"There is a husband who is to marry you, a Russian—the Russians are most chivalrous men, and this one, who is to be your husband, has been a protégé of mine from his infancy. He has, besides, vast wealth. He is not an old man, as you may suppose from your father's letter and from what I have said, he is only twenty-five years old. He speaks English perfectly, and has more learning than the ancient Egyptians. He plays the piano magnificently. Can you find anything to complain of in the description of Count Potowski?"

Josephine answered, timidly, though frankly:

"No, your ladyship."

"That is well," cried Lady Vengea, then she bent forward and pressed her withered lips to the white brow of Miss Beauvilliers. "The compact is signed and sealed," she exclaimed, triumphantly. "You consent then to become the Countess Potowski?"

"But the count, madam," faltered Josephine, "he may not wish to marry me."

Lady Vengea burst into a harsh laugh.

"The poor fellow has been raving mad ever since he saw your photograph," she said, "which I obtained from your father a month ago. He would marry you to-morrow if I wished it."

Josephine started like a frightened deer.

"Not so soon," she said, "not so soon, your ladyship."

"Don't be alarmed," returned Lady Vengea, "you are a prize well worth the winning. You may exercise as much female caprice and coquetry as you please towards Potowski for the space of two months, at the end of that time child's play must be over, and we must proceed to the serious business of life. You must marry Potowski by the end of May, but up to that time you are not obliged to let him know that you have any serious intention of becoming his wife."

Josephine breathed a little more freely. A host of things might happen in two months. Meanwhile perhaps this count was a good and clever young man to whom she might afford the meek submission and pious duty of a wife, since her fate seemed so planned out for her. Such a marriage would raise her beloved family from penury. True, she could never love anybody but Chatteris, but was it not her duty to stifle that love as soon as possible?

With a sigh and a smile then she promised obedience to the Lady Vengea.

That lady now led the way from the green velvet drawing-room to another of violet satin and gold, from this gorgeous suite of apartments they passed on to a wide staircase richly carpeted; the walls were covered with paintings from floor to ceiling. On the first landing, where statues in marble stood holding lamps in their hands, several doors opened, through one of these passed the Lady Vengea followed by Josephine. They entered a lordly suite of rooms, boudoir, ante-chamber, bed chamber, and bathroom, all furnished in rose-coloured silk and walnut wood.

"This colour will suit your complexion," said the Lady Vengea, smiling. "See your bath is rose-tinted marble, hot and cold water are always laid on. You shall have a lady's maid who is a Russian, but she speaks English, her name is Griselda. But you will say you have no clothes to wear; wait a little, I have provided for that."

Here the Lady Vengea opened the door of a splendid wardrobe, and Josephine could not repress an exclamation of surprise and delight at the sight of the beautiful dresses which were hanging in a row. There were morning dresses, walking dresses, dinner dresses and ball costumes, all fashionably and artistically made.

"Do you wonder how I obtained your measure?" inquired Lady Vengea, triumphantly. "I measured you with my eye, and I gave the length and size to the first artists in London. See, here are cashmere morning robes, velvet walking dresses, silk and satin dinner dresses, the airiest and most fairy-like ball costumes. Now choose for yourself which dinner dress you will wear, for I dare say you would not like to be troubled to change your dress more than once to-day."

Here the Lady Vengea rang a handbell, and there entered the apartment a tall, strongly-built Russian girl, with high cheek-bones and sandy hair. She smiled, but Josephine did not like her smile. She wore a fanciful costume—a black velvet bodice over a white muslin jacket, a short flounced skirt of crimson silk, high-heeled crimson shoes; her sandy hair was elaborately plaited at the back, and frizzed and puffed in front, under a small lace cap, trimmed with crimson bows.

Griselda curtsied with all due humility to Josephine.

"This is your new mistress," said the Lady Vengea; "I can answer for it that you will find her gentle as a dove, and generous as a princess."

Josephine started and coloured, for she knew she had nothing wherewith to be generous.

"Nay," said Lady Vengea, smiling. "If I interpret your looks aright, Josephine, you imagine yourself to be without funds; but you are completely mistaken. After you are dressed you will find me in the green drawing-room, and then I will make you a few presents."

So saying, the Lady Vengea departed from the room.

Griselda then hastened to show to Josephine all the arrangements that had been made for her comfort and convenience. The drawers of the wardrobe were filled with all kinds of underclothing of the most beautiful description, trimmed with the finest lace and embroidery. There were bath slippers, house slippers, walking boots, and ball shoes, all of the most exquisite make, and all fitting Josephine to a nicety. On the toilet table were brushes, combs, and tooth-brushes with handles of ivory, carved and enamelled with gold; there were cases of scent, pomades, delicate creams for the skin—everything that art could devise, or luxury desire.

Finally, Josephine washed with the warm water and scented soap, dressed herself in a suit of the underclothes, and then, wrapped up in a rich silken dressing-robe, she sat on a low chair, while Griselda arranged her hair. This once completed, it was left to her to choose her dinner-dress. From a variety of bright colours Josephine, with perfect good taste, since this was her first instalment amidst luxury and splendour, chose only a black silk dress, fashionably made indeed, with a low body and short sleeves. The Lady Vengea had said that she was to wear a dinner-dress; but this robe was unrelieved by colour of any sort. It was simply trimmed with black lace.

Thanking Griselda, Josephine passed out of the room. In the green drawing-room she discovered Lady Vengea. Her ladyship rose up, and clasped her hands with delight when she saw Josephine.

"Exquisite!" she said; "beautiful! What would Chatteris say if he could see you now? What lovely arms you have, child—a little thin through hard work and scanty food, but time will rectify all that. And so you chose a modest black dress. Well, nothing could suit you better; but you are beautiful in everything—a blush-rose beauty, and yet so dignified, so queenlike in your bearing. Come here; we must have golden bracelets on those white arms, and a golden chain round that slender throat."

As Lady Vengea spoke she opened a drawer and took out a pair of massive golden bracelets, to each of which was attached a golden heart, with a large ruby in the centre. On each of Josephine's wrists the Lady Vengea clasped one of these bracelets, and round her neck she fastened a massive and splendid chain, to which was attached a ruby heart, larger than either of the others.

"Now," said the Lady Vengea, "you look like a princess—but here are two more cases of jewels, one is a set of emeralds, the other is a set of pearls, so that you need not always wear the same jewels—and here, Josephine, is a purse, it contains twenty guineas, pocket money for the present month."

"Your ladyship," cried Josephine, with tears in her eyes, "I do not deserve all this kindness, it overwhelms me."

"Merit it, deserve it," cried the Lady Vengea, "it rests with you in the future; the only proof which I require you to give me of your gratitude, is that you will receive kindly and politely the Count Potowski."

"Certainly I will, madam," cried Josephine, in surprise; "you tell me that he is good and noble, and it seems that it will be my fate to unite my lot with his—I cannot love him, but I will do my duty by him—"

"Enough," said Lady Vengea, and she left the room.

Presently she returned, threw open the door, and announced the Count Potowski.

Josephine looked around, but could see no Count.

"Where is the count, your ladyship?" she faltered forth.

"Look there," responded Lady Vengea.

CHAPTER XX.

Brown dwarf, that o'er the mirkland strays,

Thy name to Keeldar tell!

The brown man of the mires, who stays

Beneath the heather-bell.

Scott.

JOSEPHINE looked in the direction where Lady Vengea pointed, and her heart stood still with the shock which she experienced when she saw the Count Potowski. He was a pigmy man, standing not higher than a child of five years old; his tiny frame was well and gracefully knit, he was dressed in the latest fashion and in evening costume.

Standing by the silken skirts of the tall and imposing Lady Vengea the rich Russian dwarf had entirely escaped the observation of the agitated and

excited Josephine. But now that Lady Vengea pointed down at the count, Josephine's eyes were directed towards him, and a thrill of horror vibrated through every fibre of her frame. Not that Josephine would have turned in disgust from the little count, had he been presented to her as a casual acquaintance—then indeed she might have pitied him, and there were even qualities in him which she might have admired; but regarding him in the light of a husband, it was not possible that the beautiful Josephine should regard him with any other sentiments than those of terror and repulsion.

The count might have been, as Lady Vengea had stated, only twenty-five years old, but he had the head and face of a man of forty. It was a very large head, out of all proportion to his pigmy size. The forehead was broad and betokened intellect, there was even benevolence strongly marked on the brow; but the lower part of the face, jaw and chin, and the thick, sensual lips, betokened a nature coarsely animal. The hair of the count was of a fiery red, as was his thick moustache and long, heavy beard. His nose was high and hooked, his eyes deep-set and of a reddish colour, like his hair; his cheeks were broad and full, and his complexion was of a uniform brickdust colour, coarsely florid and oily. Such a large red head and hair and complexion, such a slender, graceful and tiny form! what wonder if the pigmy count struck Lady Josephine as some hideous monstrosity? She had seen such little men carved in wood in the windows of toyshops; but she had never expected to see such a man in the flesh. The count was just the person who would have made the fortune of the proprietor of a show at a country fair.

"Count Potowski," cried Lady Vengea, "allow me to present you to Miss Josephine Beauvilliers, my adopted daughter."

The little count bowed almost to the ground, indeed it was not very difficult for him to reach the ground when he bowed.

Josephine returned his salutation. She was white as marble. She cast on Lady Vengea an imploring look, but the eyes of the strange lady sedulously avoided meeting hers.

The count approached Josephine; he stood before her on the hearthrug and looked up adoringly into her lovely face, at the same time rubbing his delicate little hands together. A priceless diamond flashed on the fore-finger of the right, a splendid emerald on the fore-finger of the left hand. Then the count spoke. His voice was piping, shrill and excessively harsh. It seemed as though it was impossible for him to modulate or command his tones.

"You are the adopted daughter of Lady Vengea," he said, "I consider myself her adopted son; therefore there should be, I believe—I think, a breaking down of the usual conventional barriers which are set up by society between young people of opposite sexes. Allow me the honour and the pleasure of shaking your hand."

Most reluctantly, and with averted face, Josephine joined her hand to the tiny palm of the Russian dwarf. Hastily extricating her hand from his clasping fingers Josephine took the liberty of seating herself at some distance from the Count Potowski; but the count went close to her, seated himself by her side, and then he began to converse.

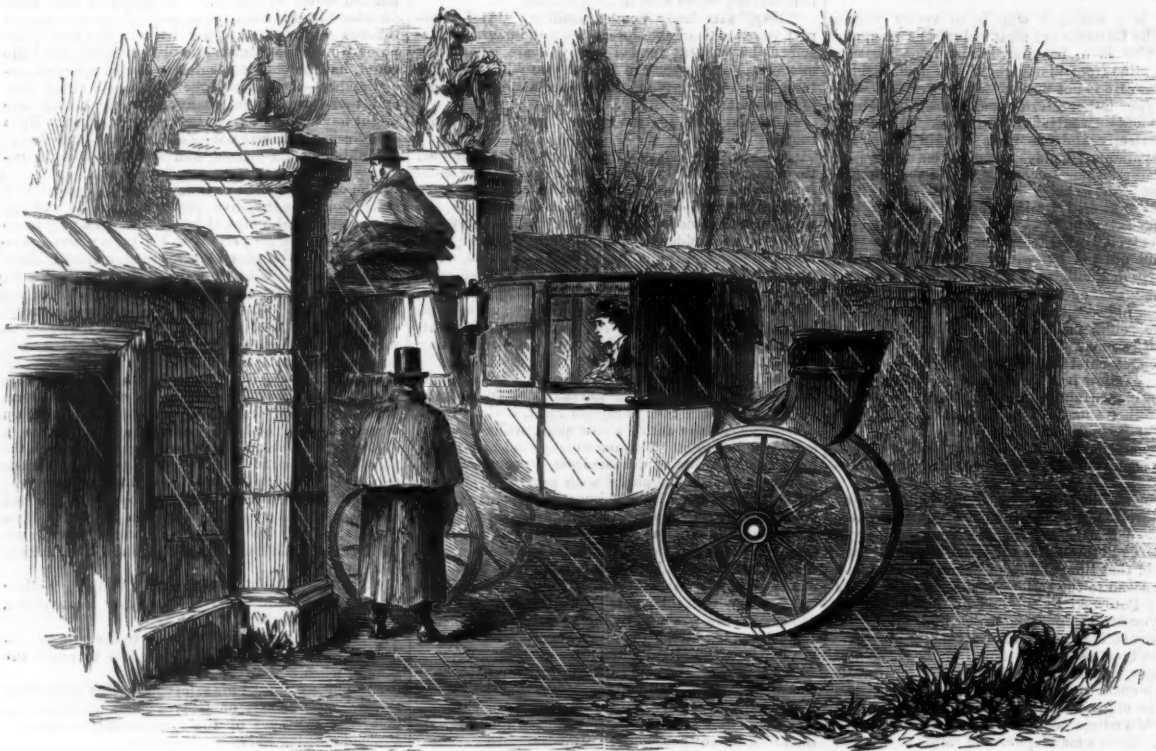
At first Josephine did not hear or heed; her brain was in a tumult, her whole soul distraught by the strange fate which had been forced upon her by the Lady Vengea. Yet in a little while she began to listen in spite of herself. She was perfectly amazed at the count's flow of words, at his deep and varied information. He seemed to have all the learning of the ancients, all the wit of the moderns, at his fingers' ends. There was not an opera, a play, or a book, a picture, a painter, or a leading newspaper article which he could not discuss and discourse on eloquently and elegantly, still in that high screeching voice.

Josephine had lived a quiet life, and she had been compelled to work for her living; but notwithstanding these disadvantages she had read considerably for her years. She was not a mere untaught hoyden, and she was able to appreciate the intellectual gifts and the high culture of the Count Potowski.

In a little while she found herself listening with absolute pleasure to his description of an historical play which he had witnessed in London.

He described the various genius of the actors, the construction of the piece, and its effect upon the audience, with the graphic ease of a born artist.

Josephine seemed to see the piece acted before her, to hear the voices of the actors, the p'audits of the spectators, the clash of military music which was introduced into the scenes, and, in fact, she realized the whole so thoroughly that her eyes sparkled, her cheeks glowed, and forgetting that the count was as good as her affianced husband, she gave herself up to the amusement of the moment—asked ques-



[ENTERING THE NEW HOME.]

tions, and expressed unfeigned delight in the recital of the count.

The Lady Vengea, occupied in knitting a purse of violet silk and gold beads, a very gorgeous, though somewhat old-fashioned piece of work, watched the two from her seat, and a smile of grim satisfaction hovered about her thin lips.

The count changed his theme. He discussed now national characteristics, the various traits of disposition and temperament. He contradicted, and with great reason, several generally received theories—he declared that it was not true that the French are altogether such an impulsive nation as it is universally believed. He said that many of them were gifted with extraordinary powers of self-command and reticence.

"If self-indulgent and pleasure-seeking during prosperity," said he, "they are nevertheless capable of enduring adversity with great heroism—they are a harder nation than some of the English," continued the count. "They are much earlier risers during bitter and severe weather. Fuel is very dear amongst them, and they will endure cold which would make an Englishman swear, and an Englishwoman weep. They know well how to practise economy, everyone who earns more than sufficient to supply him with the bare necessities of life manages to save something, and often something considerable. Neither are they universally so cheerful a nation as they are represented. Among those who are better off constant excitement is absolutely necessary. Pleasure, music, company, lights, dances, theatres, the Frenchman must have all these, and the Frenchwoman stands no less in need of them. Deprived of these, the so-called lively Frenchman becomes a miserable, moody individual, of whose excess of gloom an ordinary Englishman can have no idea. They are a nation full of contradictions."

Thus the count talked on, and his conversation amused and delighted Josephine.

Meanwhile the rain continued; there was no possibility of going out.

Presently Lady Vengea entered the room.

"If you are tired of conversation," she said, smiling, "would you not like to hear the count perform on the piano?"

"Very much," cried Josephine.

There was a piano in an exquisitely beautiful case, which stood at the right hand as you entered that gorgeous drawing-room; this case was of polished ebony inlaid with mother-of-pearl in the most fanciful and chaste devices.

The little count rose to his feet, tripped airily and gracefully across the room, and took his place before

the magnificent piano, which might well have served as a gift for a royal prince. He opened the case and commenced forthwith to play. There was a marvellous magic in his performance. The piece was called the "Ice Queen," and was supposed to represent the fairies of the north, dancing on the adamantine plains, by the shores of the frozen ocean.

There was something sparkling and brilliant as diamonds in the variations which the count played.

Josephine could almost have imagined that she beheld the troops of fairies, arrayed in colours brighter and richer than the tints of the rainbow, approaching by thousands to join the fantastic dances.

Then all at once the enormous company seemed to run mad, thousands of dancers leaped wildly over one another's heads, in a species of insane, yet fantastic and graceful leapfrog; their shouts and laughter filled the icy atmosphere.

It was wonderful that the count should have possessed the power of representing all this by the magic play of his nimble fingers over the ivory keys.

Of course it required a sympathetic listener, and one with a kindred and poetical genius like Josephine, to appreciate and enter into the spirit of this wonderful performance.

The piece concluded with a march, in which all the fairies were supposed to depart slowly and solemnly from the scene of the fête. In the centre of the procession sat the queen in her car formed of a single diamond.

At length the last echoes of the tiny footsteps died away, and the count sprang to his feet, and approached Josephine.

He found her with her glorious eyes sparkling, her fair cheek glowing, her sweet lips apart.

"It is delicious!" she said, enthusiastically.

Instantly the little count was in the seventh heaven. Seating himself by the side of Josephine, he poured forth a rhapsody, at which the young girl started and turned deathly pale, and then drawing away from him, as much as politeness permitted, she cast upon him a look of terror and entreaty, which he was keen-witted enough to interpret aright. His own countenance fell, and for a moment a look of bitter disappointment and rage shot out of his eyes. Mastering his emotion, however, by a violent effort, the count managed adroitly to change his theme, and soon he was amusing Josephine with graphic accounts of his travels in Italy.

Josephine listened again in delight, and so the day wore away.

They dined in state at seven o'clock in the grand hall, and after dinner in the evening, the count again

performed on the exquisite piano. Not one word more of rhapsody did he venture to utter for several days.

Lady Vengea left the young people almost entirely together. She invited no visitors at present to Tempestcloud Castle, and she hoped sincerely that Josephine, having no one else with whom to contrast the count, would grow to appreciate his many brilliant qualities, would overlook his pigmy size and hideous face.

Josephine, for her own part, never overlooked either of these considerations for a single instant, that is to say, when she looked upon the count as a possible husband. She could never contemplate this latter contingency without a sickening shudder, that almost seemed to turn her warm young blood to ice. Josephine was very young, and she must be pardoned if, with the natural shrinking of youth from contemplating that which is repulsive and terrifying, she put this disagreeable thought away whenever it occurred to her, and contrived to enjoy the otherwise pleasant life which she had led at Tempestcloud Castle, for it was a pleasant life in many respects.

She dwelt in beautiful rooms, she wore beautiful clothes, all her surroundings were beautiful in the highest sense of the word—pictures, statues, exquisite furniture, hothouse plants, wide and lofty apartments, delicate and delicious repasts, and besides all this, there was a magnificent library at Tempestcloud, where Lady Vengea had collected all the best books of the best authors in the five great languages of Europe—English, French, German, Italian and Spanish.

Lady Vengea took in all the magazines and the newest books of the day.

Josephine spent much of her time in reading, and the count never intruded upon her studies; but when once she laid her book aside, he was ready to discuss with her the plot and merits of the story, the genius or pathos of the poem, the pith, wit or brilliancy of the essay. He was a kind, yet keen critic, when he came to discuss the works spun out by the brains of other men and women.

The weather grew finer as the days went on. The March violets peeped out in the shrubberies, the young lambs frisked in the meadows, the sun shone brightly in the middle of the day, and the wild breath of the west wind came laden with a promise of approaching summer.

Josephine used to ride out upon a white palfrey, accompanied by the count upon a fine and spirited chestnut nag. The little fellow managed his horse wonderfully and to perfection.

(To be continued.)



[BEAU'S HOME.]

ADRIEN LEROY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"Maurice Durant," "Fickle Fortune," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XI.

Flies were made for spiders,
And spiders make webs for flies.

THE morning following the night of the conversation recorded in our last, Mr. Jasper Vermont ordered out the small travelling carriage—Adrien's stables and coach horses were always at his disposal—and returned to London.

"He had business to do," he left word for Adrien, "settlements to make at Tattersall's, but he would be back as soon as possible."

So, with a coachman and a footman, Mr. Jasper journeyed to London, serene, placid and filled with that satisfaction which most men experience when they are about to lavish other folks' money.

At the Park Lane house Mr. Jasper dismissed the carriage and the servants; and, most respectfully received by the servants, who looked upon him as grand vizier to their sultan, Adrien, partook of a light but expensive luncheon, and then, with one of his friend's choicest regalia, strolled through the park.

The loungers and idlers who knew him nodded with a forced smile of friendship—it is politic to be friendly and cordial with a man who has the confidence of the leader of fashion; those who did not look after him and seemed to half nod with that air which says so plainly, "There goes a wealthy, prosperous man."

Mr. Jasper's hat was off half a dozen times a minute to the ladies of his acquaintance, his face wreathed in a perpetual smile of recognition.

Presently, when he had nearly reached the Arch, he met a loungee with a face as long and doleful as a profligate undertaker's.

Mr. Jasper stopped him.
"Well, Beau, how do you do? Been committing murder, or have you married?"

"Neither," answered the exquisite, a captain in the "Household," one of the fastest and most liked fellows of the day. "Neither, Jasper, but I've just come from the city."

"City of the Tombs!" drawled Mr. Jasper, facetiously.

Captain Beauclerc laughed, but rather mournfully.
"Yes, all my hopes are buried there. Beastly place! They ought to stick over the west side of Temple Bar 'Abandon hope all ye who enter here!'"

Mr. Vermont laughed.

"Well, what's the matter with it, Beau, won't it lend you any more cash?"

"Worse," said the young spendthrift. "It actually wants me to repay what I owe it already."

"Oh!" remarked Mr. Jasper, simply, but his "oh" was full of meaning—and sympathy.

"Yes. That hard-hearted old fiend, Harker—what a wretch he is, I should like to bury him. I'm sure he isn't alive, unless he's the living skeleton. Such a bag of skin, bones and hard-heartedness. Well, there's a pretty little tot-up in the way of bills he holds of mine, and of course I expected to have 'em renewed as usual."

"Yes," said Mr. Jasper, "of course, as you have been having them re-done for the last three years?"

Captain Beauclerc nodded.

"Yes, but the old fellow shakes that long head and says 'No!' and all I could say wouldn't change it. You know the cock-and-bull story he tells? It's always 'Well, Captain Beauclerc, I should be glad to serve you in the matter, but I am not the principal here. I am a servant, a servant only. My principal bade me call your bills in, and I am compelled to do so. I can but obey. It is not in my power to grant your request. The bills must be called in—and the usual steps taken if you are unable to meet them!'"

Mr. Jasper laughed quietly, but with sarcastic enjoyment.

"Of course; that's the moneylender's stereotyped excuse. He is never the principal, always puts the screw on by another man's order. Poor Beau, I'm afraid he'll sell you up."

Captain Beauclerc whistled.

"It will be a terrific crash for Lord Vane, you know, Jasper. He can't give us younger ones anything more than a small allowance, and it comes hard upon him when we turn up like this."

"What's the amount?" asked Mr. Jasper.

"Not much," replied the captain. "Only seven thousand. But why do you ask?" he added, with a faint eagerness. "Do you think you can help me?"

"Well—" said Mr. Jasper, slowly, eyeing his cigar meditatively.

"I know one way," said the troubled debtor, "and that is to get Adrien Leroy to back the bills, but I can't ask him."

"But I can," said Mr. Jasper, smiling with conscious power, "and I'll do it for you, Beau."

"You will!" exclaimed the captain, gratefully, almost forgetting the impasibility which his order considered so necessary. "You will! Jasper, you're a brick. I'm sure he'll do it for you. What a fine fellow you are!"

"Ah," said Mr. Jasper, with a smile, "but will old Harker take Leroy's name?"

"Why, of course, who wouldn't?" asked the guardsman, the cloud dispelled from his brow. "It's as good as the Bank of England. Harker take it? Only try him! What would he get by selling me up? Nothing."

"True," said Mr. Jasper, pleasantly. "You're not worth the price of that old broom, are you, Beau? Well, I'll do it for you. Going to Lady Eveline's to-night? Yes? Then we shall meet again at Philippi, till then farewell!"

And with a shake of his fat, smooth hand, the benevolent Mr. Jasper went smiling on his way.

None knew where Mr. Jasper really lived.

He had his private apartments in Adrien Leroy's Park Lane house, and in Adrien's quarters at the castle four out of the immense number of rooms were kept as and called Mr. Vermont's suite.

But the locality of that particular morsel of the globe which Mr. Vermont sanctified by the name of 'home' every one—Adrien included—was ignorant. If questioned on the subject it was Mr. Jasper's custom to answer, lightly:

"Home? What does such a wail, such a jetsum and flotsam of the world's tide want with a home? My dear fellow—or 'madam,' if the locutor happened to be a lady—if you want me I am at either of these three places: Leroy's town house, the club, or Barminster Castle."

And to either of these places his fashionable acquaintances directed their inquiries for him.

But Mr. Jasper had a home, and it consisted of two rooms on the first floor of an unpretentious house in Mount Street.

Small, very plainly furnished they were, and without the slightest pretension to that luxury without which Mr. Jasper had often declared he should find it impossible to live.

Here he could find shelter at any time of the night, for he possessed a pass-key, and by his orders the bed was kept continually aired.

It was no uncommon thing for the maid who waited on him to leave the rooms tenantless at night and find them occupied when she rose to open the house, Mr. Jasper having returned in the dead of night, silent and noiseless.

The second morning after his sudden flight to town Mr. Jasper sat in his sitting-room before a breakfast so plain that his fashionable acquaintances would have stared in astonishment and doubted ocular demonstration.

Mr. Jasper Vermont, the epicure, the connoisseur of sauces and the authority on Perigords, breakfasting

off a plain, underdone chop and some liquid produced from grinding and boiling dried beans—alias, coffee! Could it be? Yes, it was. Mr. Jasper boasted to himself that he could adapt himself to circumstances, enjoy expensive cuisines at his friends' expense, and exist on and even enjoy the plainest diet at his own. Before him, crowding the small table, were piles of letters, sheets of closely-written foolscap, slips of memorandum forms.

Standing before him was a short, thin man dressed in black.

This man was remarkable for two things. Firstly, for the extreme pallor of his face, secondly, for the sharp, restless, yet greedy look of his eyes. He was fearfully thin, and his clothes of black hue and seedy, much-worn condition, heightened his meagre appearance.

He stood, one bony hand thrust in his waistcoat, his eyes fixed on the ground.

There was a look of such profound humility, fear, deprecation on his face that his relation in sentiment to the placid-faced Mr. Jasper, who sat voraciously devouring his chop, could not have been more markedly *exquisite* and deprecative if he had thrown him off upon the ground and whined to his master to tread upon and spurn him.

While Mr. Jasper finished his chop and drank the remains of his coffee the man never moved, never raised his eyes, he simply waited patiently, doggedly, with the servile obsequiousness of a spaniel.

Mr. Jasper pushed his plate away, wiped his thin, mobile lips with his table-napkin, and drew the heap of papers towards him.

With keen eyes and quick brain he grasped the multiplicity of facts they set forth, checked the long column of figures, struck the balances, and with a nod of satisfaction looked up at the man waiting for a word to be thrown to him.

"All right, Harker, as far as I see, and as you know, that's all the way and a little beyond. A decent balance, but we must do better than that. Now where's the private list?"

"Here, sir," said the man, in a dry, rasping voice, very quiet but very clear, like the creaking of an old, rusty-hinged door.

"Where?—oh, yes, I see. Now let me see. Oh, Pomfrey has come to us, has he? Writing poetry is not a paying game, eh? or is it the fine grand company that runs away with the golden counters? Well, all fish—or idiots, that come to our net, oh, no matter what wild drives them? Thirty per cent. from Pomfrey; no more?"

"I could not get any more, sir," said Mr. Harker, earnestly. "I tried, tried hard, indeed I did, sir! I would not give in until he threatened to go to another office."

"Hem! well, I suppose it's the truth, though of course all money-lenders are rogues! and you're a money-lender, you know."

And Mr. Jasper looked up for a moment, to laugh at the logical joke.

"Who backs his paper? The marquis—oh, oh—and my lord is pretty deeply on our books already, isn't he? Where are his statistics?"

"Here, sir," said Mr. Harker, taking a paper from the heap.

Mr. Jasper glanced at it, and laid it down with an evil smile.

"Oh, he's good for more than that, Harker; but be cautious. We'll lend him money for another ten thousand, but put another five per cent. on—another five per cent. on. Marquises must pay, to set the fashion to commoner folk. By the way, Captain Beauclerc—"

"Whose bills you instructed me to call in, sir?"

"Yes; well, I've promised to intercede for him with you, and to get Mr. Leroy to back the renewal. Hah! hah! what fun it is! Poor idiot! He shook my hand with the gratitude of a Demon! Mr. Leroy will back the renewal, and you will let it run. Beauclerc's the second son, Lord Vane is on his last legs, and the oldest won't live another year; we can come down like kites when the gallant captain has the title and estates. Till then we'll wait, but stick out for another two and a half per cent. Make the calves bleed, Harker, make 'em bleed."

"And in the matter of the young artist Wilson, sir?"

"Eh, Wilson? Oh, yes. You sell him up to-morrow."

"Yes, sir; that was your command. He called yesterday, and pleaded for another week. His wife is dying; they are starving. He begs hard for another week—"

"Stuff, another week; the dog means another year. He should have thought of the time for repaying when he was borrowing. Another week—not another hour. Sell him up to-morrow! Mind, I say it. The dissolute dog! Did not I hear him call me 'a parasite from the pavement,' one night at a ball? Screens have ears, Mr. Wilson, and parasites have memories. Sell him up—do you hear, Harker?"

"I do, sir; it shall be done," replied the man, meekly.

"And now for Leroy's account. Ha!" and with a gleam of fiendish delight he scrutinized the figures and statements. "Hah! you are getting them in—fast."

"All Mr. Leroy's bills we are getting in—buying up wherever they are to be met with, sir, according to your instructions."

"Right; get him into your hands—you know how, and be prepared for—you know what!"

Mr. Harker inclined his head as a Hindu half-caste does to a first-class Brahmin.

"And now for the women. Hah! hah! descriptions of butterflies will come upon the nasty sticky papers that were meant to catch the blue-bottles only; well, then, they must take the consequences. What! the Countess Merivale—the fair Eveline. The disciple of De Musset, and one of Leroy's loves! She want to borrow money?"

"She dabbles in the Stock Exchange. I know her business man; he owes us money, sir, and we know his secrets. She has been buying lately. She has deposited her diamonds, sir—"

"Her diamonds? The famous Merivale diamonds? Where are they?"

"Here, sir!" said Mr. Harker produced from his long pocket a shallow morocco case, which he handed with all due humility to his employer.

Mr. Jasper Vermont opened the case, and gazed on them with twinkling eyes; then shutting it with a laugh, he bent back in his chair, and rubbed his fat smooth hands over his chin.

"And what will her ladyship do for them? And where were those left? I saw her last night, and—by Heaven! she wore—"

"False imitations, sir. I had them made up for her. Did you think the counterfeit good?"

"Capital! Oh, is it not rich? That old idiot must have eyed her proudly, and gazed over his Merivale diamonds on his beautiful wife's fair bosom, little guessing they were Mr. Harker's laundry glass mockeries! Capital, Harker! but take care—take care. Remember madame the duchess, who brought her jewels to pledge, and discovered that they were paste already, and that the duke had done the transmutation before her. Beware!"

"I am careful, sir, I am careful, very. I do not think—I trust—there have been no losses, even small ones. I do my best, sir, indeed I do my best."

"Well, I believe you. You keep up appearances, do you? Never forget to urge upon them that you are only a subordinate, that you have a principal and act only on his instructions! The more you assert it the more they'll think it a falsehood. Keep it up, Harker, and then—well, you know I keep my promise. By the way, how is the little Lucy?"

As he spoke the name, half-scornfully, quite indifferently, a visible change came over the man—his tool and puppet. His face became paler, if that were possible, his head dropped lower, his whole figure drooped forward in deepest dejection, fear, supplication.

"Well, sir, quite well, and deeply grateful for your kindness, your mercy," he said, wetting his dry lips.

"Ah, and well she may be, young hussy. A fine thing for her! Married and respectable. Ah, if that soft-hearted, simple little husband of hers knew all I know! Strange that I should have dropped on to her and that young first lover of hers down in that quiet country place! Strange, wasn't it? Now, I daresay they thought they were as safe as at the bottom of the sea. Didn't think Mr. Jasper Vermont, a friend of the family, could be stopping at the same hotel. Young dog, he ought to have married her. Better that he didn't, eh? Yet that weak, amiable little grocer, innocent and unsuspecting, lets her have it all her own way and believes her just a little purer and whiter than the angels! Ah! ah! clever little thing, Lucy. Makes him think she loves him, I daresay."

"My poor child loves her husband better than her own life, sir," breathed the father. "Oh, sir, have pity on her! She is so happy—they love each other so! She is my own flesh and blood! Forget that cursed night, that fend who led her astray. Forget that she is anything but the wife of an honest man. Oh, sir, have mercy!"

"Well, Harker, I will. I'm all mercy. Do your duty by me and I won't go down and tell the story of that night to Lucy's good little grocer husband. But don't ask me to forget, my good fellow, for that's folly! I never forget!"

The man's head dropped on his breast, and with a quiet helpless gesture he wiped the great beads of perspiration from his white forehead.

"Thank you, sir, thank you, sir. I'll do my duty. I'll work for you like a slave, like a dog. I'll give my life if you require it, but spare my child—my poor Lucy!"

Mr. Jasper Vermont leaned back in his chair and regarded the man's agony with quiet amusement and

enjoyment for a few minutes; then he gathered the papers together, put them into the drawer of his safe, locked it with a Bramah key, and dismissed Mr. Harker with a nod.

"You can go. Don't forget the Leroy paper, renew Beauclerc, but sell that artist scamp to the last stick and stone! Hah! Hah! parasites can bite as well as cling, Mr. Wilson."

CHAPTER XII.

Alas, the love of women! it is known
To be a lovely and a fearful thing.

Mrs. JOHANN WILFER, to whom we beg leave to introduce our readers, was by profession a picture "toner," or, in other words, a member of a gang of ingenious rascals, who imitated the less known gems of the old masters and palmed them off on the public and wealthy collectors as genuine.

The impostures were very cleverly got up, and quite a little system was instituted to bring them to a state of perfection.

Of that system Mr. Johann—who was by birth of Germany, where such artistic shams are most immensely manufactured—undertook the part of "toning," that is, giving to the imitations the necessary mistiness and discolouration supposed to be produced by age.

He was very clever at his work, and the gang never dared to put out a picture without his aid.

The way in which a mock Rubens, Titian, or some other great masterpiece was manufactured was the following.

One man, most noted for figures, would paint the subject; another, who could best depict drapery, clothed the figures; another, more apt at foliage, supplied the transient things; and the skies and landscape fell to the lot of the members of the gang best qualified for that portion of the picture. When the artists had finished, the picture was handed to Mr. Wilfer, who set to work with various oils, tints and chemicals, and gave it the smoky, creamy tone which distinguished the great originals.

Then the picture was completed and a purchaser sought for.

Of course the disposal of the sham was not the easiest part of the swindle, and here again Mr. Wilfer played an important part.

Dressed as a respectable mechanic or a decayed city clerk, he would commence the attack by waiting upon some wealthy art collector and pitching a doleful tale of privation and want, state that he had the old picture hanging up in his room which he would like to sell, and which he implored the wealthy collector to purchase.

The dupe, always enthusiastic, would as a rule jump at the bait and hasten in a cab to Mr. Wilfer's house in Soho, or to the residence of some other member of the gang where the cunningly executed imposture hung, carefully covered with dust and looking as old as Adam.

A price was named, and Mr. Wilfer would seem to accept.

But before the time approached for the delivery of the picture, the poor clerk or mechanic would call again and state with great delight that another man to whom he had applied before he had the honour of seeing the present intending purchaser, had suddenly offered him a much larger sum than the collector offered, and asked what was he to do.

The collector, very much alarmed lest he should lose the prize, usually bid over the supposed rival; the picture was delivered and paid for, and the gang shared the spoil.

Now, Mr. Wilfer might have thriven—as dishonesty generally does thrive, notwithstanding all the copy-book mottoes—but for one besetting sin, and that was intemperance. His greatest idea of enjoyment was to be in a state of drunkenness from Sunday morning to Saturday night.

This course of perpetual intoxication had made its marks upon Mr. Wilfer's countenance, which, though not one looking at the mottled face and bearded eyes would believe it, had been a by no means unpleasant one in his youth.

Mr. Wilfer had been a handsome young scamp, always fond of his glass, and always leading a dissolute, ruinous life since he had run away from school, and broken his good mother's heart. She had not been the only one to love him, for before the good looks had been washed out by strong drink he had won the heart of a simple little country girl named Lucy Goodwin.

Lucy believed her lover to be everything that was good and clever, and trusted him to the extent of her own betrayal.

Under some pretence the young scoundrel had enticed her to Canterbury, and there had proved himself the ruffian that he was by betraying the confiding girl and deserting her a few weeks after.

She was the only daughter of a widower, a clerk in a country bank, who, broken-hearted at his daughter's

her ruin, threw up his situation, changed his name, and, accompanied by the poor weak girl, fled to London, there to hide his misery and his child. Alas! before he had been there a month a dark, smooth-faced gentleman appeared at their quiet lodgings, announced that he knew of the girl's escapades, and threatened to proclaim her shame if Mr. Harker, as Mr. Goodwin was now called, did not bend himself to his will.

What could the tortured father do but submit?

In a month after the interview a new money-lending firm had sprung up in the dismal court of a City thoroughfare, and the managing man was Mr. Harker. The principal's name never transpired, and though the silent, moody, but hard-hearted Mr. Harker always insisted that there was one, his unfortunate clients laughed him to scorn, disbelieved his assertions, and declared that the story was a fiction invented to aid him in his extortions.

Time passed on.

Poor Lucy's pretty face and modest ways—perhaps her very sadness, which clung to her in never-ending remembrance—caught the heart of a simple-minded man, one John Ashford, a grocer in a small country village on the banks of the Thames.

After a struggle against it the poor girl returned his love, and ventured to marry him.

The villain Wilfer was supposed to be dead. None knew her secret beside her father and kind Mr. Vermont, and so she ventured to grasp the happiness held out to her, and so strengthened the chain which bound her father in slavery to Mr. Jasper Vermont's will.

For if they, the father and daughter, feared disclosure before, how much did they dread it now, when Lucy was married and another heart must break with hers!

Meanwhile an event, one of those links which bind widely separated beings by a lengthened chain and at last brings them together to work out some inevitable purpose, occurred to Johann Wilfer.

One day while he was lounging at his door and thirstily longing for a draught of his enemy, a small brougham drove up to the court, a lady, whose face was hidden by a thick veil and who held a little girl by the hand, descended from her carriage, and walked straight up to Mr. Wilfer.

"You sold a picture to a gentleman yesterday?" she said, in anything but a ladylike voice.

"I did," said Johann, who had palmed off a sham Titian, as asserted, to an old gentleman.

"Well, I'm his wife," said the woman, rather hesitatingly, "and I have come to make you an offer. Are you married?"

"No," said Mr. Johann. "But walk upstairs. The lady did so, and seated in the room, still holding the child, lifted her veil.

Johann Wilfer knew the face instantly. He had seen it at a theatre only the night before.

It was the beautiful Haidee Levison. He looked at the child and guessed what she required of him.

"I'm not married," he said; "but my sister lives with me, a very kind woman, and very fond of little girls."

Miss Levison nodded. "Will you take charge of this one?" she said, kissing the girl, a dark, beautiful-eyed child, like a young Spaniard.

"I will," he answered. "It is not mine," she said.

Mr. Wilfer smiled significantly. "Needn't trouble to go into particulars, miss. The little one will be well taken care of. What's the terms?"

Miss Levison named them. They were liberal and Mr. Wilfer jumped at them.

"You understand," said the lady. "She is not my child, but I am anxious to keep her quiet. You will get the cash regular as a clock, and all you've got to do is to keep the girl."—"Gal" she pronounced it—"out of the way, and answer no questions if they're asked."

"I can do that, I think," said Mr. Wilfer, with a grin, and so the first quarter's allowance was paid in advance, the little dark-eyed child was left to Mr. Wilfer's tender mercies, and Miss Levison took her departure.

Thus was forged another link in the chain of incidents which was gradually drawing so many lives into the whirlpool.

The inexorable Father Time still passed on, and Mr. Wilfer kept life in his valuable charge and drank by her means still harder, working at his sham pictures occasionally, but generally dragging on existence on the allowance Miss Levison sent him. It had come regularly, as she had promised, but he saw nothing of her, excepting once, when bitten by a sudden curiosity he went to the cabinet which her new possessor, a certain wealthy and celebrated Mr. Leroy, had purchased for her.

One day the gang of which Mr. Wilfer was so useful a member despatched him with a picture to Mr. Harker, the money-lender, who, they had been informed, was a likely purchaser of sham "old masters."

Mr. Wilfer saw Mr. Harker, and, notwithstanding the change of name, recognized him.

The old man, on his side, never having heard the name of Lucy's betrayer—for she had kept it from him—knew nothing of his visitor, purchased the picture, intending to compel one of his wealthy clients to take it as part of a loan, a well-known trick of the dishonest class of money-lenders.

Mr. Harker's principal discovered the imposition at a glance, and saw in the imposter another tool. He instructed Harker to obtain a written guarantee of the genuineness of the picture from the pretended mechanic, and Mr. Wilfer, being half intoxicated, for once forgot his usual caution, and gave the required pledge.

With that in his possession, Mr. Jasper had Mr. Johann Wilfer in his power, and only left him undisturbed because he saw no opportunity of using him.

When he wanted he knew that he had only to exert the power which the clever warranty gave him and Mr. Wilfer would be his obedient servant, as so many better men were already.

Quite unconscious of the sword that hung over him, Mr. Wilfer went in for a good drinking bout. It lasted for three weeks; then, when his share of the spoil had melted, he returned and visited his rage upon Reah.

Bruised and sore, she fled into the streets, where Adrien Leroy found her, and Mr. Wilfer, having done his duty by the charge, fell into a drunken slumber.

From this he was aroused by the entrance of a gaily dressed lady, darkly veiled.

He stumbled to his feet, stood, and half sobered, recognized Miss Levison.

Her face was flushed, the angry light Mr. Jasper had called up there by his sneers at her vulgarity was still burning in her dark eyes.

It was long after midnight, and she had hastened from the hideously decorated room in St. James's to Mr. Wilfer on a mission of inquiry.

"Where is the gal?" she asked, glancing at Mr. Wilfer.

"The gal," he repeated, stolidly.

"Yes, Reah!" retorted Miss Levison, her jewels flashing in the glittering candlelight. "Where is she?"

"She is not at home," said Mr. Wilfer.

"Is she dead?" asked Haidee, her eyes glaring.

"No, she ain't," said Mr. Wilfer; "not anything like it, but as lively as a kitten. She's out, gone out with her aunt. Gone to stay the night."

Haidee looked keenly at him.

"If you don't believe as she's adrift, go upstairs and look at her room."

Haidee walked upstairs and returned.

"It is locked," she said.

"Of course; she's quite the lady, keeps the keys herself," said Mr. Wilfer. "Look here, here's her bonnet and shawl, here's one of her boots."

Miss Levison was convinced and breathed more freely.

"There is some money," she said, throwing him a packet of coin. "I was anxious to know if I was right with the gal."

"Was you?" said Mr. Wilfer, thinking, not unnaturally, that she meant the reverse of what she said. "You'd be quite cut up if you thought she had out this mortal life, I've no doubt."

She turned on him with a fierceness that made him recoil.

"If anything happens to that gal," she said, "I'll hang you. For, mind my words, for I mean 'em, I shouldn't have cared then if you had put her out of the way perhaps; but now I want her. Do you hear? I want her, and you take care she's alive and ready when I come for her."

Then she left the room, leaving Mr. Wilfer staring after her, and wishing that for once he had stayed his hand, and not driven his charge into the old misery of the streets.

Little did Mr. Wilfer or Miss Levison imagine that she was at that instant asleep in Adrien Leroy's chambers.

We will now return to her.

Love is the universal epidemic, there is no inoculation that will carry one exempt; given a warm human heart and there is the natural susceptibility.

No matter the rank, no matter the sex—time, position, reason are cast to the winds; folly, with a grin, casts wisdom from its throne, and both, hand-in-hand, yield themselves to the decree, both bow to the despotic monarch.

All must love. Lady Juliet, the noble, moving like a celestial

beauty among the maskers, is caught by the fair hair and languishing eyes of Romeo.

Marguerite, the base-born, passing up the cathedral steps, is snared by the magic youth of the rejuvenated Faust.

The beggar maid, threading her way through the mazes of King Cophetua's camp, is stricken by the regal splendour of his face and form, and dares return the admiration of his eyes and love a king.

So it is from high to low. Love reigns supreme. Dynasties break off short at the stem, kingdoms rock to and fro, thrones totter and fall, crowns crumble into dust on kingly heads; but love rules and lives on, immortal, triumphant, unconquerable.

Long may he live and reign!

Reah, the street wail, whom a great and wealthy man had found perishing in the cold and carried to the luxury and warmth and the magnificence of his table, knew nothing of all, had never heard of Romeo and Juliet, Faust and Marguerite, or King Cophetua, and the Beggar Maid.

All she knew was that she loved—nay, scarcely knew even that; was conscious only that for a kind word from those full, sweetly-gentle lips, for a glance of those dark eyes, she would have gladly died.

Loved him—the great kindly creature, who seemed something more than human in his beauty and his belongings! No, she dared not so much even in thought. She longed only to see him again—and yet again; to worship him from afar as a devotee kneels tremulously before some terrible yet, lovable god, and to clasp to her heart the remembrance of those few delicious fairylike hours when she nestled against his breast and basked in the sunshine of his presence.

Poor Reah, how sweet and yet how bitter had been that awaking in the gilded cabinet! How sweet to find herself there, awake and not in a dream, how bitter to know that she had no right there and that she must go!

That splendid golden chamber with all the wonderful undreamt-of things was not for her. She looked down at her wet, dirt-stained dress, at her worn, ragged shoes, at her cold hands, and shuddered. She had no right there. Should she take advantage of his goodness to remain and sully the beauty of his palace—for to her it was a palace—by her unworthy presence? No, woman-child as she was, she spurned the thought, caught up her hat and rose resolute.

"He will think Reah ungrateful," she murmured, with half-closed eyes. "He will think—no matter, he is great and good, he will forget poor Reah before half an hour. I will go to Johann and get my beating. This is no place for me."

Then, with a little graceful movement, Oriental, Egyptian-like, she bent over the mantel and pressed her lips to the spot where Adrien had rested. Quickly but passionately she kissed his coat, the chair he had sat in, then, with the noiseless step of a young tigress, stole from the room.

The sun was breaking through the mist, but she shivered as its rays touched her, and sighing trod wearily Soho way.

It was all over, this little patch of fairy light in the drear darkness of the girl's existence, and as she reminded herself of its finish she shuddered again.

Looking back so far as she could remember she saw herself quite a child in the room in the court with Johann Wilfer and Martha.

From the first day of her consciousness of existence till now this had been the first bit of sunshine. What wonder that she was unhappy at parting with it.

Suddenly, as she passed into Oxford Street, she stopped, struck with such an idea that the rich young blood flew to her pale, dark cheek and flushed it into sudden beauty. Her large southern eyes grew thoughtful, then full of a strange light.

"Why should I go back to Johann?" she murmured. "Can't I follow him—the great gentleman? Can't I be a servant?"

The answer came quickly enough, and from her inner self.

No, she must go back. Of what service could she be to such a noble gentleman? No, she must go back.

And so, wearily, but still with that grace which Oriental blood bestows though it run in the veins of a common gipsy, such a street wail as Reah, she reached Johann Wilfer's.

Mr. Johann Wilfer was not Reah's father. She knew that and nothing more. She had never asked for any information concerning her parentage—nay, had scarcely wished for any; it was enough for her that Johann gave her enough bread to keep life within her, and, when he was drunk, enough blows to make that life miserable.

This virtuous guardian was out on an early drinking expedition, and Reah stole up the rickety, dimly lighted stairs, paused at the door of the living-room to ascertain that it was empty, then ascended to the staircase to the garret, which served as her special apartment.

It was as small and as squalid as all the other rooms in the crowded court, but it was different from them in one respect, it was clean.

A miserable bed of straw and a threadbare quilt, a chair without a back, a washstand on three legs, and a triangular piece of silvered glass, the remains of, at its very best, a cheap mirror, comprised the furniture.

This triangular piece of looking-glass reflected the young girl's beautiful face in all manner of hideous forms, as is the manner of bad glasses. The quilt just kept her from perishing with the cold. But yet the mirror, the bed, the room itself, were precious to her, for they were her own. Beyond its sacred threshold Mr. Johann or Martha never passed. She had a lock and key to it, and to enter now she unlocked the rickety door.

Locking it after her she sank upon the bed and covered her face with her hands, her head drooped forward, thereby forming a picture of well-shaped hands and framework of glorious hair that a painter would have revelled in, and gave way to her tears.

It was natural to weep, but it was weak, and, with a sudden gesture, almost Spanish in its intensity, she flung her head back, rose from her drooping position and stared into the mirror.

"I will not think of the beautiful place. I will not think of him, more beautiful still. What, me! Reah, a miserable, dirty girl! How could he touch me, carry me"—she shuddered at herself—"and speak so kindly? Will he be sorry that I ran away? Will he be! Bah! he will laugh and ask that proud servant to see that I haven't stolen anything. Dirty little girl! how dared you go into the pretty place?"

She shook her head mournfully at her distorted reflection; then she sighed and went downstairs.

Mr. Johann had returned, for a wonder, sober; indeed his condition was very much to be wondered at, for he was in possession of the means with which to procure that sort of beatific intoxication his soul loved.

He was counting some silver on the table, some gold too, for the girl's quick eye caught the shimmer of it, and he looked up half-fiercely, half-contemptuously.

"Well, girl, where have you been? You're like a cat, or a policeman, never to be found when you're wanted. There was a pretty lady wanted to see you last night—a swell, my girl. Ha! ha! But of course you were out of the way. Where had you got to, you young cat?"

"Anywhere, nowhere," replied Reah, who did not fear him when he was sober, though she hated him always.

"Ah, that's the style! The swell ought to have heard you talk like that. She'd say I was bringin' you up well—ha! ha! Come here, let's have a look at you."

Reah never moved, but looked at him steadily.

"What, you won't come?" he said, with a grin. "Well, there's something for your obstinacy, little mule!" and he flung a half-crown across to her.

The girl took it up and looked at it, then looked him in the face questioningly.

"You're thinking I'm mighty generous, eh? So I am, girl, foolishly generous," and he laughed mockingly. "Well, what do you say if all the lot's for you, eh?"

"All for me!" repeated the girl, stopping short in her task of making neat the mantelshelf, "all for me!"

"Yes, when you get it, little cat! Ha! ha! all for you? No, it's for me; and I've a good mind to take that half-crown back. An idiot and his money's soon parted; but he's more idiotic to part with other people's. There, keep the half-crown and get yourself a rope to hang yourself with. I'm going out. Tell that old ape, when she comes in, that I shall want some dinner, a good 'un—half a pound of steak and a pot o' porter with a quarten o' gin in it. Mind you remember, now, or I'll break every bone in your body," and with that forcible admonition the man shuffled out.

After a few hours he returned, not drunk, but fairly spiteful, ill-tempered and stupidly brutal.

Reah heard him stumble up the stairs and rose from her seat on the floor—she had been sitting there motionless and lost in thought since he had gone—and prepared to receive the expected blow.

"Well, you monkey, where's the steak and the liquor?"

"Martha hasn't come back."

"Hasn't come back? hasn't come back," mocking her stupidly. "Well, get out of my sight," and raising his unsteady hand he aimed a blow at her.

She dodged it, passed him, and went up to her garret.

Presently she heard him stumble down the stairs again, and gliding down to the room below saw that he had taken up his post at the door.

A few minutes afterwards, where she sat before the window, staring out wearily, hopelessly, she heard

a voice that sent the blood rushing from her face to her heart.

It was Adrien Leroy's.

She heard every word, her heart beating as if it would burst.

How dared Johann tell such falsehoods?

He would go away; she should never see him—hear him again.

Oh, what agony was there in the "Never see him again!"

With a bound she reached the door—then stopped, sighed and shrank back. After all it was better; he would offer her money, perhaps (how little she knew him), would say a few kind words, make her long for him more, and the pain would be worse, worse, worse. No, let him go, believing Johann's falsehoods, and let her forget him.

So she crouched beneath the window, and listened thirstily to her benefactor's retreating footsteps. He was gone.

When her brutal guardian came up she could have killed him for his deception, though she had refrained from contradicting it.

Then came the accusation, the attack and the escape.

She was out upon the world—free, it was true, but free only, perhaps, to starve. She wandered about the streets, and gradually her feet were drawn towards Adrien's chambers. She watched the door, herself hidden under a portico, and saw the marquis and Pomfret come out.

Later on she saw Adrien himself and forgot her hunger and destitution in the sight.

That night she slept, or rather lay, quiescent but awake under a straw wagon in Covent Garden Market.

On the morrow she bought herself some food, and, like a moth still hovering at the candle, returned to watch Adrien's door.

Then, failing to satisfy the hunger of her eyes, she spent some few more pence and wandered out up the Hampstead Road, out into the country, aimless, purposeless. But at night she returned, and learning from the gossip of the footmen the destination of the carriage which stood at Adrien's door, waited at Lady Eveline's for a glimpse of him.

There was no wagon in Covent Garden that night, no shelter, and she crouched upon a door-step, and her star being hidden from her, watched those in heaven. Watching thus she fell asleep. Policemen turned their lanterns on her, but, touched by the beauty and the innocence of the face, let her lie without the awful ejaculation, "Move on."

Once a man, flushed with wine, staggered towards her and was about to clutch her arm, but a something about the face, its loveliness, its mournfulness, its helplessness, touched and sobered him, and, with a solemn shake of the head, he passed on.

Presently a dark-robed woman, passing slowly with weary feet, stopped and looked at her. She was one of that new band of Samaritans who have sprung up in our London streets with healing in their hands and pity in their hearts—a Sister of Mercy, belonging to no order, following no set rules, who, dressed in the black serge and white monastic bands, seek the helpless and the lost, and strive to help and restore them. She stopped, bent down, and, drawing her veil aside, looked closely at the motionless face.

Then she sighed and turned her head away.

"So beautiful, so young! I was once beautiful and young. Can it be possible? Sister, sister!"

Reah awoke at the gentle touch, and sprang like a little tigress to her feet.

"Johann, do not beat me: I —"

"My poor girl, no one will beat you! Will you come with me?"

"With you?" repeated Reah, then eyeing her suspiciously. "Where? Not far?"

"No, not far; but why do you ask? Do you not wish to leave the street? Is there any one you wish to be near?"

"No," replied Reah; "no," but she added to herself as the Sister of Mercy took her hand, "She shall not take me far from here."

(To be continued.)

SINGULAR CLAIM.—The Civil Tribunal of the Seine has just heard a matter arising out of the sale of Madlle. Duverger's diamonds. Those precious stones produced more than half a million of francs, and at the moment the actress was about to receive her money she was informed that an opposition had been lodged by a person named Damies, a theatrical manager in the suburbs of Paris, who founded his claim on the fact that he had been commissioned some time ago to make arrangements for a company to go on a provincial tour with Madlle. Duverger. He did so, and as the speculation did not pay he asserted that he was some thousands of francs out of pocket and demanded repayment from the present defendant.

The court ordered that the lady should leave 2,000 francs in its hands as security, in case M. Damies should substantiate his claim, and that the balance should be paid over to her by M. Escribe, the auctioneer.

LOVE IS ENOUGH.

"Love is enough," said Cicely Guile, and she shut the book. She did not look at either of the two men who were gazing at her with two sorts of curiosity.

Charles Leland, with his forty years, his faultless manners and well-preserved heart, studied her as if she were a picture, from the tip of the small bronze boot to the crowning braid of pale blonde hair, and said to himself, in the face of his worldly wisdom: "Was there ever so beautiful an adventuress?"

Maurice Ware had no worldly wisdom. He had only his young, knightly heart, his college lore, and his aspirations. Cicely Guile was a divinity to him. He contemplated her, sitting there in the quaint carved chair, with her lustrous, dark-toned dress sweeping about her, a length of dainty lace gathered about her fair throat and supple wrists, her colourless skin and soft gray eyes, and wealth of ashy-gold hair wound in careless braids around her head, and said to himself that

"A man had given all other bliss.
And all his worldly worth for this—
To waste his whole life in one kiss
Upon her perfect lips."

But Maurice Ware was far enough at present from Cicely's lips, and probably destined to remain so. Meanwhile he might shrivel up some of his fresh heart-fancies in the blaze of her beauty. He reached his hand for the poem as she repeated the title, and the moody gloom that had settled about his mouth while she was talking with Charles Leland disappeared in a smile.

Charles Leland rose and left the two alone—the same, that is, as alone—in the dim corner of the library, where they sat in the shadow of the book-lined walls, with the tall embroidered screen between them and the ruddy firelight, within which Madam Guile sat, clicking her gleaming needles in and out the strands of scarlet wool.

"Sit down, Mr. Leland," she said as that gentleman approached her, "sit down. I don't see very much of the company I entertain since Miss Guile's arrival."

"My dear madam, Miss Guile has taken us all by storm. We shall recover in time, and return to our allegiance." And the speaker made a courtly bow.

"I daresay. When her coach turns into a pumpkin and her footmen into lizards—eh?" And the old woman laughed maliciously.

"Cinderella will have her little glass slippers, even if the rest of her estate melts away," replied the guest, with wary gallantry.

"Ha, ha! Even if—Well, sir, it will melt. So don't you trust it. When my hour strikes, Cicely Guile may run off with her lizards and mice."

"Some lucky prince will run off with Cicely long before that, Madam Guile."

"Well, I don't know. I heard her bold speech—'Love is enough'—to you just now. Girls did not make such speeches when I was young."

"Love will have to be enough for the young lady, Madam Guile, if you mean to disinherit her."

Charles Leland took care not to let any anxiety which he possibly felt upon this subject infect his voice.

"Disinherit? I never inherited her yet. What is she to me? I have a son of my own to inherit the Guile estates. What is she to me?"

"She is your great niece, I believe, Madam Guile, and your protégée, and an exquisite creature to boot."

"She's all that, of course. But what good does she do me? I thought she was coming here to talk and read to me. Instead of that I have got a minx on my hands who drags me about to balls and—uses up my grandmother's lace and fills my house with fortune hunters. Ah, yes, a beautiful speculation I made when I unearthed Miss Guile."

"For all that, acknowledge how much you enjoy her and admire her."

"I do neither. I don't approve of girls who tell men that 'love is enough.'"

"I think Miss Guile's love might content any one lucky enough to win it."

"Ha, ha! you want the pumpkin coach and the lizard coachman, eh? Well, I tell you I'll not leave her so much as the gold powder she puts in her hair. I'll have my boy back. Yes, if I have to charter a ship and hire a crew myself. Ay, if I have to go alone and rescue him from those frozen wastes with my own old hands."

"Dear Madam Guile, you know how we all feel about Eric's fate; you know that neither money nor devotion would be lacking to restore him. But do not be unjust to your niece. It is not like you."

"You are very good at special pleading, sir. Pray

go on. Has the young lady appointed you to argue her case with me?"

"Miss Guile has accorded me no privileges. And I perceive that I do not possess even those of Madam Guile's old friend."

Rising from his seat, and towering above the tall embroidered screen, he saw Cicely leaning back in her chair still, with her dainty blue-veined hands crossed against the dark silk, her eyes half shut, listening to Maurice Ware.

"Liberties differ from privileges," said Madam Guile rising also with the aid of her gold-topped cane. "Gentlemen, I bid you good evening. Cicely, if your friends will excuse you?"

"They will undoubtedly, aunt, if you need me," and Cicely, with her stately height and sweeping silks, came slowly forward and offered her arm to her relative.

Charles Leland smiled his adieu. "She does not know that she stands no chance for the old woman's money," was his mental comment.

He was mistaken.

The two men walked away together.

"If Madam Guile were not in the habit of doing precisely what she had declared she should not do, I should accuse her of being both unjust and ungenerous towards Miss Cicely," Charles Leland remarked.

Maurice Ware started. He had no idea of what his companion was talking about.

"She has just assured me that she did not intend to leave the young lady a shilling of all her vast estates."

"Ah! has Madam Guile vast estates then?"

"My dear boy, do people indulge in costly carpets and rare old China and roll about in their carriages unless they have?"

"I suppose not. I had not considered."

"So I thought. There is still time, however. You have only known the belle Cicely a week."

"Is it only a week?"

"That is all. I am good at keeping dates. She has only been with her relative a month. I hope it will be for the best that she was brought from her career of obscurity to administer to the old woman."

"Obscurity?"

"Poor Maurice! So blinded that you have not even made an inquiry. Well, I will enlighten you. Madam Guile—the old sinner—had one son. Just such a son, I doubt not, as she deserved, but, at any rate, a scapegrace. Five years ago he went off on an Arctic expedition, and has never been heard of since. I don't think his mother's grief added to her wrinkles, but still she was lonesome, and by dint of search she discovered one remaining scion of her race, a scion of the wrong sex, unfortunately, but still a Guile; and with much flourish of trumpets she brought her forward out of poverty and obscurity and set her upon the pinnacle of her favour. Of course I mean Cicely, and until to-night I have had no doubts that, in default of Eric's restoration, which everybody hopes will never occur, she was to be the old lady's heiress."

Maurice sighed.

"Well, she doesn't need money."

"On the contrary, I think she needs it very much. And, my dear boy, I think she means to have it. It isn't girls like Cicely Guile to whom 'love is enough.'"

Madam Guile had retired within her state bedstead with its eider-down coverlets and heavy hangings. Her petulant exactions were at an end for that day, and Cicely thought she was free. But her aunt recalled her as she was slipping away.

"There seems to be some notion, Miss Guile, that you are to be my heiress. Allow me to request you to deny all such imputations."

"Aunt!"

"There, there! I am never to be answered at bedtime. What I wish to say is that it has occurred to me that when you find yourself cut off with a shilling you or some of your advisers will be bringing in claims for your services against the estate. Do you hear?"

The old woman had raised herself in the bed. Her wrinkled face, set amid the frills of her cap, was white with rage.

Cicely had the rare gift of keeping still. She stood absolutely still now, in the doorway, and bore the insulting words. Her aunt continued:

"To forestall this I intend to pay you wages for keeping yourself dressed like a French doll, idling in easy chairs, and making your bold speeches to the men that run after you. I shall pay you ten pounds a month, and you shall give me a receipt in full—do you hear?"

Cicely bowed her fair head.

"You are very kind, aunt. The money—"

"There, don't answer me. I am going to give you the money. Come here. Raise the valance. You see a chest. Draw it out."

Cicely obeyed with an effort. The chest, although on rollers, was prodigiously heavy. Madam Guile took from her neck a slender chain, to which was fastened a key.

"Turn the lock," she said.

Cicely obeyed. She lifted the lid, and saw a rare display of treasure. There were parures of precious stones, miniatures set in flashing rims, fans crusted with brilliants. The value of the contents of the chest was almost incalculable.

"Why, aunt," she involuntarily exclaimed, "aren't you afraid of being robbed?"

"No, miss, not unless you rob me. Lift the tray. Ten of these belong to you. Let me see you count them. There, look the chest. Give me the key. Go to the desk and write a receipt in full to date, for services rendered. Great services!"

Cicely reached her chamber with her money. She was almost breathless with excitement.

"Oh, precious gold! Can words tell what you are worth to me?"

She stole to the window, and looked out. It was a clear, bright night.

"I must carry it at once," she murmured, "and relieve myself of my suspense. Who knows what he may have suffered through all these weeks?"

She was loosening her trailing dress and taking off her ornaments with nervous haste. Every other minute she stopped to listen. When she had completely disguised herself in a dark dress, a long cloak, a hood and veil, she cautiously opened her door and listened again. The house was dark and silent. Shading her candle, she stole down the back stairs. An unwary step made them creak once. Cicely's heart stopped beating.

"If she should see me now!" she gasped. Her limbs shook under her. "It is too frightful a risk," and beads of perspiration started from her pores.

But no one was aroused. The silence of the great house was like that of a sepulchre. Cicely stole onward. She had taken note of doors and fastenings, and knew her point of egress—a basement door, secured by a simple lock and a ponderous chain. With noiseless fingers she undid the chain and left it hanging. The key was in her hand, her hand upon the knob, and the candle extinguished, when something brushed against her. She had forgotten the watch-dog.

"Down, Bob!" she said, sternly.

The dog, reassured, wagged his tail, and pressed close to her side.

"Down, sir!" she entreated, and she attempted to crowd through the partially opened door, leaving him behind.

A low, determined growl showed her the attempt was vain. Bob and she would have to go together, or not at all.

"Come, then," she said to him.

He paused suspiciously a moment, which seemed to Cicely like a century, and then pursued rather than followed her, with a vigilant look in his terrible eyes.

Cicely, with her undesired escort, went on her way rapidly until she reached a distant, narrow street, then, traversing it, she stopped at a dimly-lighted house. Evidently the way was familiar, for she entered without ringing. She passed through the passage, up two flights of broad stairs, in almost breathless haste, and with a light tap entered a room, well-lighted and furnished, filled with tobacco smoke, disorderly and comfortless. The only occupant was a young man, who lay in a dressing-gown upon a couch, smoking and reading. He turned coolly towards the intruders.

"Really, Miss Guile, this is an unexpected pleasure," he said, with irony.

"Eric, I give you my sacred word that I could come no sooner; that until to-night I have not had one shilling in my possession since I entered your mother's house."

"Ah! Then you have money now?"

"Yes; ten pounds. She is to pay me that every month."

"Munificent! What does she do with her thousands?"

"She does, I presume, what she likes with her own."

"Ah! you are getting on with her famously, I should judge."

"I am not very happy, Eric. I regret my compact with you every day. I go about and get a great deal of attention and all that. But the sense of deceit weighs upon me."

"Bother! Why don't you get more money?"

"I cannot. Come forward and claim your own."

"Likely talk—to a felon. You seem to forget that my ignorance is not a pure matter of fancy."

"Oh, Eric, with such opportunities and prospects how did you ever go astray so?"

"Well, I suppose for vanity. Madam Guile is such a screw. What does she say of me?"

"She talks of going in search of you; she speaks of you with great affection."

"Good! If I keep out of her way I shall be her heir. If I am not, Cicely, look out for arsenic in your coffee."

"Your mother has no idea of leaving her money to me. She has expressly told me so. And you need not threaten me, Eric, when I am enduring a sort of

servitude for your exclusive benefit and by your entreaty. Have you suffered for money?"

"No; my opium holds out. As to your servitude, Cicely, that is a good joke. I saw you lolling in your opera-box with Charles Leland holding your fan. I was at the tableau party—as one of the decorators, mind—and saw you do Iphigenia. I saw the exotics left at the door for Miss Guile, and here is a list of your partners at Tuesday's ball. Not quite so strict a servitude as teaching in a public school, eh, Miss Guile?"

"I was independent there, and innocent of the fraud I am perpetrating now."

"Good; you show how you are suffering. Sentiment aside, Cicely, let us give up trying which can hit the hardest. You are getting a good chance. You will marry according to your beauty and your blood, which you never could have done if I had not put you in the way. For my part, I am willing to acknowledge that I owe you an obligation as great as what I can confer. You shielded and disguised me when I was in danger, and now, as I understand, you propose to furnish me with ten pounds per month, for which I can only say, small favours thankfully received. By the way, what did you bring that brute for—protection?"

Bob, finding himself addressed, gave a low growl. He had remained standing, with ears and tail erect, beside Cicely, with watchful eyes fastened upon Eric Guile.

"I could not get rid of him," replied Cicely. "As you may imagine, it is not easy for me to leave the house at night so."

"And she keeps a dog, eh? and a brace of pistols. I daresay, and has bolts and bars enough to stock a prison?"

"With so many valuables she naturally uses all proper precautions."

"She used to make me sleep with her chest. Does she impose that pleasant duty on you?"

"No; she has it under her own bed; she took the money from it to-night. Here it is, Eric. And now I must go."

"Stop a moment. Have you got a lover?"

"No."

"I am going with you, Cicely. You must not come here again alone."

"You need not trouble."

Evidently she was not anxious for his company.

"Oh, I don't quite forget that I am a gentleman. I do not propose to expose you to insult."

"But, Eric—"

He was putting his coat on.

"No one could recognize me any more than they could you. I shall see you safely in. Another time I will meet you. You can make an appointment by writing."

"Yes; I had no idea how to write to you, or I should have done so this time. Besides, I was very anxious. I did not know how much you might need the money."

"You are a good girl, Cicely, and have saved me from desperation. I shan't forget it."

"Oh, Eric, come back to your mother. She would help you to elude punishment; she would get you away."

"You don't know her. She would curse me, and leave her money to some asylum."

"What are you doing, Eric? I mean how are you occupying yourself?"

"Gambling—when I have anything to stake."

Cicely sighed; she knew that Madam Guile would rather think of her only son as dead. She shuddered a little at her own implication, but she saw no way out of the deception in which she had been led, partly through the temptation of her ambition, partly by her native generosity and anxiety to aid the only relative known to her in the world.

Cicely's life had been so full of excitements of late that the episode of her visit to her cousin, when once safely terminated, mingled with other memories, and left no worrying impression. She was a little startled by her aunt's inquiring the following morning what she proposed to do with her money, but she was able to answer composedly that she had immediate use for it.

"I did not know but you might like to purchase a new dress for Mrs. Torrent's dancing-party," said Madam Guile.

"I can wear my pink silk with the lace trimmings," replied Cicely.

"If you think you are pretty enough to wear a soiled ball dress with impunity, I must disagree with you," said the elder lady, who was whimsical and contrary as independence and disappointment could well make her. "Pray get on your bonnet and cloak, and we will go and order something fresh, if it is only a muslin."

But Madam Guile's tastes did not affect muslins, and she chose for Cicely a pure white glacé silk, to be draped with illusion and festooned with white lilies.

"We'll see," she chuckled, "whether there's another woman in the room who dare wear a dress without a fleck of colour about it."

Cicely looked, if possible, lovelier in the dead white dress, when the night came for wearing it, than in anything in which she had yet appeared. It was near two months since she had been introduced into her aunt's circle, and she reigned an undisputed belle. That night, to complete her costume, Madame Guile had taken from her chest a point-lace fan with ivory sticks adorned with seed pearls.

"Don't let Charles Leland break it," she snarled, as she put it in Cicely's hands.

"Indeed? He'll do an awkward one if he falls in love with you."

Cicely turned her head. She knew that he had done this already; since the night when Madame Guile so candidly explained her intentions regarding her young relative he had been unremitting in a tender and protecting sort of attention, which had made him irresistible to Cicely, who had always regarded him with favour.

He was waiting for her when she entered Mrs. Torrent's parlours that evening. His eyes told her how astonishingly lovely she was, and hers told back how glad she was to be lovely to him.

The evening was nearly over when they sat together in a little ante-room dimly lighted, massed like a bower with fragrant flowers; the dance music sounded afar off, the trickle of a fountain made music near, and Cicely's heart beat the sweetest music of all.

"I am older and graver than you, Cicely, but I love you with a lover's love, and with the love of a protector," so Charles Leland was saying, and Cicely's little hand was resting in his, and the heaving of the lilies on her breast told him that the sense of protection was very precious.

"When I ask you to give me yourself, darling, I feel how great a boon it is; your youth and beauty and unstained heart. If you had money to boot, I should never have dared to ask," and he smiled.

"Aunt Guile will give me no money. I don't know but she will turn me out of the house when she knows you wish to marry me." And then it suddenly smote Cicely about Eric. How was she to keep his secret, and to supply his wants in event of her marriage? "Perhaps," she faltered, "it will be best for us to say nothing at present."

Charles Leland's brow clouded slightly. His own record was clear, and he had an honourable man's horror of mystifications.

"Dear, I do not fear Madame Guile. We are no way dependent on her favour."

"No; and yet, perhaps, while she needs me. She has been kind, and—"

"While she needs you? Surely, Cicely, you don't mean while she lives?"

"No. I don't know. I must have a little time to consider."

It was tingling through Cicely's nerves that she must have Eric's consent; that she had a secret and a master. He had no power, of course, except the power to trouble her. And yet he had some power too; for she had promised never to betray his identity.

Charles Leland's brow did not clear.

"Cicely, there is nothing that you would keep back from me? nothing in your past that I might not know, dear?"

Could she say there was nothing? She shook her head as a subterfuge.

"You do not answer me," he said, anxiously.

"Concerning myself, I believe there is nothing."

"But concerning others? Oh, Cicely, I cannot endure to begin with a mystery—that means division, not union."

His words restored her faltering courage. She took her hand from his and left his side.

"Yes, there is a mystery. We must not meet again until I can clear it."

"Cicely, stay. I can trust you."

"I must have your confidence as my right, not as a concession, or I cannot have it at all."

"At all!" he started up; "you don't mean that there is a doubt but you can clear any mystery which hangs about you?"

"Some doubt, perhaps," she said, coldly. "But you shall not suffer by it."

"Not suffer?" he caught her hand to detain her. "I tell you, Cicely, that I trust you as I love you. And 'love is enough.' You shall not leave me; what are other's secrets to me? You have done no wrong."

"I cannot have it so. Good night. Some time, perhaps, I will send for you."

"Some time? Perhaps?" he echoed, as she glided away.

He little knew by what severe tests the love and trust he so freely pledged her were to be shaken before they met again.

Cicely had an appointment with Eric the following evening. Madame Guile always retired early after an evening paper, and dismissed the servants, so that the house was quiet.

Cicely, hooded and veiled, stole down guiltily to the area door. She had told Eric she would merely

hand him the money, and he was there to receive it. She was obliged to add:

"I am coming out, Eric. I have something to say to you."

"I was about to utter the same words," he repeated, with a little surprise. "I have something to say to you. Let me look the door. What a huge key. There, take my arm. Now say your say first."

"Eric, you must release me from my compact. I cannot live with your mother, nor keep your secret, nor give you money any longer."

"Indeed. And may I ask why?"

"Because—because—I shall be married, if you will release me."

"Ah, so I supposed. But it is quite impossible for me to release you. Unless you can make it worth my while to do so."

"Why, Eric?"—she trembled in every limb—"you don't mean that you would be so cruel."

"Cruel? that is good. I have put you in the way of a capital settlement, and you have handed over ten pounds. A bargain is a bargain, Miss Guile."

"There was no bargain. Moreover, there is no need of these clandestine proceedings. Your home, your fortune, awaits you. Your perversity alone makes you an intriguing beggar."

"You do not state the case with exactness. It is a failing common to your sex. I have forfeited the claims—legally forfeited them—which you urge me to push. And I am desperately in want of money, more so than you can conjecture. In fact, so desperately that I must and will have it, at any cost."

"You will have no more from me, then. Not even, Eric, if I have to betray you."

"Not so fast, my fair cousin: You overlook the fact that you are in my power as well as I in yours."

"I in your power?" said Cicely, haughtily.

"Ask yourself how well your lover would relish an account of your visit to my rooms. Don't flatter yourself there were no witnesses."

"You are trying to frighten me, Eric. You will not hold such a thing over me?"

"I will hold you bound to furnish me with some given sum every month, for I have no other way to procure it. I don't consider it extortion, for when I come to my own I will repay with interest. But in the meantime a bond is a bond. If you attempt to betray me, I will defame you. I am a Guile. Neither tears nor prayers will move me. First love is never fatal. And now, good night."

Cicely, with Bob, as usual, beside her, hastened home and to bed. The house was dim and silent as before. There was nothing to indicate that during her half-hour's absence her doom had been wrought out.

In the evening papers Charles Leland, waiting every hour for some word from Cicely Guile to relieve his disquiet, read the following paragraph:

"A daring and skilful robbery was perpetrated last night at the residence of Mrs. Guile, of Park Lane, whereby a chest of valuables kept in that lady's sleeping apartment was rifled of precious stones of great value, the entire loss being estimated at upwards of ten thousand pounds. There being no indications of a forced entrance, the servants have been placed under strict surveillance. The police are actively engaged in the case."

The next morning the papers contained the following:

"An unexpected feature in the great jewel robbery has been brought to light. A young and beautiful relative of Mrs. Guile's, who has been for some months residing under her roof, is implicated in the affair. She is known to have left the house by an area door, taking the watch-dog with her, between ten and eleven o'clock. She was absent half an hour, during which time her accomplices undoubtedly accomplished the theft. The mystery of the proceedings is at present insoluble, and the excitement intense. Miss Guile has been placed under arrest, but offers no explanations."

Charles Leland sat for some moments paralyzed. Then, with all haste, he proceeded to Madame Guile's.

"Where is she?" he demanded.

"In gaol, of course. This is my reward."

"You do not believe her guilty?"

"Certainly. I am not in love with her."

"Madam Guile, be merciful as you hope for mercy. That young girl has never robbed you."

"She is allied with those who have."

"Find who they are. A worthless father, a scoundrel of a brother, perhaps, whose clutches she cannot escape. Lose no time. Find who these connexions are."

"They are found," said a voice at hand—a strangely familiar voice to both the listeners; and Eric Guile, with his habitual disguise stripped off, stood before his mother.

She tottered towards him, and recoiled, taking it all in.

"You—have robbed your mother! Oh, Eric!"

"Don't make a scene. It was the only way I had of coming to my own, just at the present time."

"And Cicely—when—where—"

"Yes," said Charles Leland, with more severity than he was aware of, "and Cicely?"

"Well, Cicely was indispensable to me. I will tell you about it."

And he told them briefly. He had never gone upon the ill-fated expedition with which he was supposed to have been lost. He was "up to a lark," as he said, in the first place. Then he got into trouble, went from bad to worse. At last, with the officers at his heels, he remembered Cicely living alone, teaching quietly for her living in a country town. He threw himself upon her mercy, and she concealed him. His crime had been done under an assumed name. No one but his cousin knew that he was alive. Through his connivance her correspondence with his mother had been brought about, he meaning to make her useful to himself, as he had measurably succeeded in doing. The temptation to steal the jewels she had inadvertently placed in his way by describing their location was irresistible. The theft had been accomplished by a professional colleague during Cicely's interview with himself.

"And now what is to be done?"

"He is my own flesh and blood," said Madame Guile, with her hard voice and relentless eyes. "I will help him to elude justice, and to get out of my sight for ever."

"His innocent victim needs our first thought," returned Charles Leland.

"Wait," said Madame Guile. "Her way is clear enough. Henceforth she is my only child. And I will leave you half of my fortune if you will not ask to marry her."

"Your whole fortune is too small a bribe, madam, and comes too late. Cicely is mine; asked for and promised. Allow me to hasten to her."

Little remains to be said. Eric was disposed of as quietly and effectually as money and wit could do it. No proceedings were instituted against the actual thief, whose silence was secured by the unmolested enjoyment of his booty.

The whole affair was hushed up, or rather extinguished, by an ovation to Cicely, in which her aunt announced her as her adopted daughter and heir.

Charles Leland and she were quietly married somewhat later. In their happiness and affluence Cicely still sometimes repeats that "love is enough." M. W. H. P.

JAPANESE SILKWORM TRADE.—Letters received from Japan state that the new Minister Iwakura is about to grant permission to dealers in silkworms' eggs to travel without hindrance into the interior of the country, that they may trade directly with the cultivators. They add that it is thought this measure will have a beneficial effect on the silkworm trade, and will attract the attention of European merchants and manufacturers.

GOOD ADVICE.—Young girls should be exceedingly careful about falling in love with young men, whether rich or poor, who yet remain to be won. They cannot guard their affections too carefully in reference to those whose sentiments toward themselves are as yet unknown. Then again, when a young lady sits down to devise a scheme for the capture of a wealthy husband, as a general would plan a campaign, we think she enters upon an undertaking which she had better not be engaged in. The chances are that she will not succeed, and that if she does succeed she will not be happy. Marriage should be the spontaneous union of hearts as well as of hands. Then the relation contains the elements of happiness, but not otherwise. It has no promise for those who enter into it solely from cold calculations of advantage. If a young woman wishes to obtain a good husband, her surest way is by the sedulous cultivation of her own head and heart, and by learning all the domestic duties on which so much depends in married life. Thus she may attract him—it may be some one now unknown to her—as the most fragrant flowers attract the bee, even from a distance.

NOR SO VAIN AFTER ALL.—Personal vanity is supposed to be a common failing, but that it can scarcely be so general as we are disposed to believe it to be is proved by the fact that people are so constantly wishing for some physical attribute which they do not possess. The stout people write to their favourite papers to inquire about some system for reducing the weight. The thin girls ask the same amiable authority what will make them plump. Black-haired people slyly purchase golden hair dye, and men with red beards dye them black. The pale beauty "touches up" a little before going to a party and the rosy one wishes "she did not look like a milkmaid." The little man is always envying men who have grown to be six feet three, and big men would often give a great deal for the pretty, dapper figures of those whose growth has not resembled that

of the oak. To get the "kink" out of curly hair and get it into straight locks, to lace in a waist that approaches the Grecian sculptor's idea of beauty, and to pad the thin form into greater bulk, is the task of every dressmaker. As for gentlemen—well, we'll only ask, does Nature make their shoulders all so square? In fact, to look other than they were made appears to be the object of the majority of people. And if that is the case, how can the human family be called vain?

SCIENCE.

A JOURNAL of the Jura announces that a rich deposit of minerals has been discovered at Ronaison. It includes silver, copper, lead, antimony, sulphur, and iron in the form of sulphuret.

The great silk balloon, "Le Secours," is the largest ever exhibited in America, and takes 90,000 cubic feet of gas to inflate it. It will carry fourteen persons. Ascents will be made with it under the direction of Captain G. Barbier, of the French Aeronautical Society, who, during the Franco-Prussian war, was employed in carrying mails and despatches from the beleaguered city of Paris when surrounded by the "circle of iron." It was successfully navigated by this gentleman over and over again, though frequently fired upon by the Prussian sharpshooters.

A NOVELTY IN ENGINES.—We live in an age of inventions, and in spite of what has been accomplished in past periods, it seems we have not reached the ultimatum of man's powers; intellect is not, therefore, decaying. A new engine has been constructed, the novelty being that it emits no smoke nor steam, and makes little noise. The engine used steam at 500 lbs. to the square inch, and maintained this pressure by natural draught without any difficulty; in fact, it worked half the time with the draught doors closed. The engine is compound, and expands the steam to the most economical limits, and then condenses it by means of two air surface condensers placed on either side of the machine. The boiler was inspected by the Belgian Government engineers, and proved by them to 2,800 lbs. water pressure per square inch, and pronounced a perfect piece of work. The engine can be driven from either end, all the driving gear being duplicate to obviate the necessity of turn-tables. The engine accomplished a speed of fifteen miles per hour, drawing its full load up gradients varying from one in two hundred to one in eighty, and was pronounced by all to be a machine likely to work a complete revolution in the use of steam.

ESSAYS ON ALCOHOLIC LIQUORS.—The French Temperance Society offers for the year 1875 prizes for competition, of 40l., 20l., and 40l. respectively. 1st. For determining by the aid of repeated chemical analyses, on a large number of samples obtained at hazard from retail shops in Paris and the Departments, the analyses and differences which exist between spirits of wine and the various alcohols sold as drinks, a prize of 40l. 2nd. To ascertain, if it be possible, by analysis of their chemical or physical properties of natural wines and brandies arising from the fermentation of the juice of the grape and other saccharines, from those of artificially prepared and fortified beverages, a prize of 20l. 3rd. To determine by chemical observations and experiments, the differences which result on the system from the use of pure natural wines and alcohols, and of others manufactured and artificially fortified and compounded with spirits, a prize of 40l. The treatises to be written either in French or Latin, and bearing a motto or device, accompanied with the name of the writer, in a sealed envelope, addressed to Dr. Lunier, general secretary, Rue de l'Université 6, Paris, before the 1st Dec., 1874.

CINCHONA IN INDIA.—Dr. King, superintendent of the Botanical Gardens, reports to the Government of Bengal, that in the government cinchona plantations at Rungbee, there were, in October last, 2,505,259 plants in permanent plantation, 5,016 stock plants for propagation, 274,000 seedlings or rooted cuttings in nursery beds for permanent plantation, 220,000 rooted plants in cutting beds, making a grand total of 3,004,275 plants, cuttings and seedlings. Of these, 235,000 are *C. saccharina*, 125,000 *C. officinalis*, and varieties, 4,695,000 *C. calisaya*; and the remainder is made up of *C. micrantha*, *C. pubulana* and *C. pitayensis*. The extension of the cinchona cultivation in Darjeeling continues. Every year additional land is brought under cinchona culture, and it is now calculated that 2,000 acres more will be cleared and planted within the next four years. With regard to ipecacuanha, upwards of 20,000 plants are now in hand, all of which promise well. Another interesting fact relating to the introduction of useful plants into India, is that of the success in the Terai of the cacao (*Theobroma cacao*, L.). The plants that were planted out about a year ago, were sent from

Kew at the suggestion of Dr. Hooker, and they are now in a most healthy and satisfactory condition.

THE SCUTTLLED SPANISH TREASURE SHIPS.—It may be remembered that in 1869 a company was formed in London for the purpose of recovering the 7,500,000l. in gold which, ever since the 21st of October, 1702, has been lying at the bottom of the Bay of Vigo, in the seventeen ships which were scuttled and sunk there on that day to prevent them from falling a prey to the Dutch and English fleet. The promoter of this company was Captain Gowen, the American, who raised the seventy Russian vessels which had been sunk in the harbour of Sebastopol at the commencement of the Crimean war. The company was about to commence its operations, when the Spanish authorities abrogated the contract, and transferred it to a rival French company, who agreed to raise the treasure upon terms more favourable to Spain. The French company was slow in getting to work, and had succeeded in only recovering a few bars of gold when the outbreak of the war between France and Germany put a stop to their operations. Capt Gowen, however, has always kept his eye upon the treasure, and he has now purchased the concession from the French company, and has organised a new company, which, under his supervision, will soon begin the attempt to recover the long-lost treasure.

MODE OF ASCERTAINING THE VARIOUS KINDS OF MATERIALS IN MIXED FABRICS.—A German industrial journal gives, after M. Vupp, the following treatment for fabrics containing silk and wool, with vegetable fibres. All vegetable fibres resist caustic alkaline solutions even when boiling, and are dissolved by sulphuric, nitric, and hydrochloric acids, even when mixed, with heat. Vegetable fibres, when burnt, do not give forth any characteristic odour. Wool, insoluble in the above acids, is really attacked by caustic alkalis, especially when hot; the sulphur which it contains combines with the alkali, and the solution becomes black when acetate of lead is added to it. In burning, wool produces the same smell as horn. Silk is dissolved, both in the acids and the caustic alkalis, and produces an odour similar to that of wool, but it contains no sulphur, and, consequently, its solution in alkalis is not blackened by acetate of lead. In order to distinguish these materials in a tissue, it is treated first with concentrated hydrochloric acid, cold; the residue is then washed in a filter, and if necessary bleached by means of water containing chlorine, and then washed again in pure water and boiled with caustic soda, which dissolves the wool, leaving the vegetable fibre intact. The wool is distinguished from silk by adding acetate of lead to the liquid, as already mentioned.

CAVIARE.

THIS is an article of food prepared from sturgeon roes, and is extensively used in Russia, where it is considered a great delicacy. Some firms on Lake Erie have undertaken the utilization of the sturgeon, receiving immense numbers from various places on the lakes. They smoke the flesh, which is cut up into strips, and prepare the roe.

There are many peculiarities connected with the treatment of the sturgeon roes and their conversion into caviare; and it may be of some service to those interested in the trade to know how this is prepared in the White Sea and the Caspian, the headquarters of the business. Two kinds are made; one fresh or grained, and the other hard or pressed. In both cases the roes are placed upon a web or network, with narrow meshes, forming a kind of sieve stretched over a wooden hoop. Possibly a fine wire gauze would answer a still better purpose. The fish eggs are then forced through the meshes by pressing the white mass lightly, until nothing is left on the upper surface but the cellular tissue, the fat and tendons. The eggs fall into a wooden receptacle placed beneath, and are next sprinkled with very fine salt of the best quality, the mass being stirred with a large wooden fork having eight or ten teeth. The quantity of salt necessarily varies, according to the season, from 5 to 1½; that is to say, in the month of August 3 to 5 pounds of salt are used to the pound (36 pounds) of roes, and 1½ to 2½ in the winter. The less the caviare is salted, the more it is esteemed.

At first the eggs, mixed with salt, exhibit a pasty appearance when stirred; but after each grain is thoroughly impregnated with the salt, the mass swells; and when stirred there is a slight rustling, similar to what would be the case in the stirring of fine particles of glass. This is a sign that the preparation is complete. The caviare is then placed in casks of linden wood, which imparts no unpleasant taste, as might be the case with most other materials.

To prepare the pressed caviare, a tub half filled with pickle, more or less strong with salt, according to the temperature of the season, is placed in the

network. To secure a thorough impregnation of the eggs by the pickle, the mass is stirred with a wooden fork, turning it always from the same side. Then the eggs are strained out, and, when thoroughly drained, a quantity of about 100 pounds is placed in a sack and subjected to the action of a press, in order to remove all of the pickle, and convert the whole into a compact mass, as curd is converted into cheese. In thus preparing the caviare a number of the eggs are broken, and a portion of the contents runs off with the pickle, so that for each pound there is a loss of 10 to 12 pounds. After removing the pressed caviare from the box, it is placed in casks, holding 30 pounds, the interior of which is lined with napkin cloth, on which account in commerce this always bears the name of "napkin caviare." The better quality of the pressed caviare, that is to say, that which has been less mashed and salted, is placed in narrow, cylindrical cloth bags, and it is then called bag caviare. Caviare is also transported in boxes of tin, hermetically sealed. Fresh caviare is always preferred to the pressed, but is more expensive. Thus, at Astrachan, fresh caviare is worth from 30 to 35 roubles the pound, while the pressed is worth only 24. It is much more profitable to prepare the green caviare than the pressed, as it brings a better price, takes less salt, and requires less labour. There are exported every year from Astrachan about 11,000 pounds of caviare, which goes especially to Berlin, Dresden and Vienna.

In commerce, the caviare from the roe of the Beluga sturgeon (*Acipenser huso*) is more esteemed than that from the *A. stellatus*. The best of all is that of the sturgeon (*A. ruthenus*); but this scarcely enters into commerce. The different kinds of sturgeon have roes differing in size, this depending upon the quality of fish, the season, and the particular place of capture. The roe of sturgeon which are taken in the sea, between the 8th of July and the 15th of August, are allowed to remain only a few hours in the pickle, and they are then removed and placed, without being pressed, in casks of 5 to 10 pounds. If, on touching the roe, they are found to be tender, and the ovaries have already begun to decay, the roe, ovaries and all are thrown into the pickle, so that the whole may be impregnated with salt. This is the most inferior quality, and is shipped in casks of 27 pounds each, and is worth only three or four roubles per pound. This is known as summer caviare. The total amount of caviare obtained in the Caspian Sea fisheries amounts in one year to 189,000 pounds (about 5,020,000 lbs.) worth 1,390,000 roubles. S. M.

Two events connected with members of the Royal family happened on Tuesday week. One was the 17th birthday of the Princess Beatrice, which was celebrated at Windsor by the firing of royal salutes and the merry pealing of church bells. The other was the birth of a son to the Princess of Teck.

Mr. CRAWSHAY, who may be regarded as the leading man in the South Wales iron and coal trades, has given a month's notice to the men in his employ—about 6,000 in number—to terminate their present contracts. It is expected that all the masters in that district will reduce wages by 20 per cent., and this is regarded as not unlikely to lead to some strikes on the part of the colliers.

The climate of Malta during the winter months is usually so mild and equable that it is the favourite resort of many persons who suffer from pulmonary complaints. A private letter, however, informs us that the late winter was far more inclement than the weather in this country during the same period, and we know several persons who have been driven back to England from Italy by the excessive cold. This is a total inversion of the usual order of things.

"FRATERNITY."—Every time the fatal word fraternity is written on the walls of Paris, civil war, says the "Vie Parisienne," is sure to follow. In the great revolution "fraternity" cost 2,022,903 lives; in 1848, 39,563; in 1871, 57,627. The word is also expensive, as in February, 1848, 1,500 barricades were raised in Paris, which, allowing 845 paving stones to each, would make a total of 1,267,500 torn up by the "sovereign people." 4,013 trees were also uprooted, 3,704 lamps broken, and innumerable police officers were burnt down.

BURMESE MARRIAGES.—Marriage among the Burmese is a most peculiar institution, and the "marriage knot" is very easily undone. If two persons are tired of each other's society, they dissolve partnership in the following simple and touching but conclusive manner: They respectively light two candles, and shutting up their hut sit down and wait until they are burned up. The one whose candle burns out first gets up at once and leaves the house (and for ever) taking nothing but the clothes he or she may have on at the time; all else then becomes the property of the other party.



[DR. WERNER'S ADVICE.]

A DRAWN GAME.

It had come to that, then. I, Maud Vivian, aged twenty-four, of sound mind, good education, respectable social position, and a professed Christian, had broken myself down in my best years, by fashionable dissipation, and was confronted by the cheerful prospect of protracted if not lifelong valetudinarianism.

Doctor Werner was no doubt a bear. Mamma said so, and so said all my aunts; but papa looked more grieved than angry, and I—I always was an absurd truth-lover at the bottom—was more interested to find out the cause of this which mamma called “a mysterious dispensation of Providence,” than to scold Doctor Werner about it. I said to him:

“But, doctor, I have only done what the others do. I have even been less self-indulgent than many. I’ve never attended more than three parties in one week. I’ve been reasonably prudent about my dress. I’m fond of dancing, to be sure, but then dancing is good exercise, I suppose.”

“Bah!” interposed the doctor, shaking his shaggy eyebrows at me in a way that would have been frightful if one were timid, but I wasn’t. “Bah! you might as well call the struggles of a man who is hung by the neck good exercise. With dancing, per se, I’ve no fault to find; but dancing in tight waists, low necks, long skirts all dragging from the hips—why, the hanging man has the easier position of the two. It’s no surer of the result, and it’s a good deal shorter.”

“But what am I to do, doctor? I’ll own, if you require it, that something is wrong—”

“Something!” again interrupted that ogre, “something! I tell you, my dear young lady, it is all wrong. There is scarcely an element of good health in your whole life.”

“Now, doctor,” I said, sharply, “you are a bear, and you know it, and I expect bearish ways from you, and I don’t object to a reasonable amount of them,

because you are rather a sensible and a skilful bear; but I am not going to be imposed upon. I am a rational being. I read, and am fond of music. I have a reasonable share of common-sense and culture. I have gotten myself into trouble, and I want you to help me out of it, if you can; but I repeat it, I’m not going to be abused.”

The doctor laughed, an ogreish kind of laugh. “Music! culture!” he said; “they are two good gifts of Heaven, which you have abused, so they have become two fiends which have tormented you till your nerves are worn as thin as a spider’s web, and your brain has become more jelly.”

“Can I be cured?” I asked.

“If you go on as you have begun, there’s an end of you; not a very speedy one, for it may take you ten, fifteen, twenty years to die.”

He paused, and sat peering at me from under his bushy, grizzled eyebrows. At length he resumed:

“Will you cut loose from the traces, assert an independence of mamma and the dressmaker, take your life in your own hand, redeem the time, and live to be a woman?”

I do not know why Doctor Werner should have had such power over me; perhaps because he was the only person who had ever known me well enough to dare to face me with an unpleasant truth, and force it upon me in spite of myself. But his words somehow seemed to pierce through and through the foggy chambers of my brain, and let in upon me new and strange light.

“Tell me what you want of me,” I said, at length. “It’s ten to one I do it, for I am desperate. I won’t be a lifelong invalid, if I can avoid it.”

“Well, then, you can avoid it. It’s not so very hard a penance either, considering the aggravation of your sin. Will you give up fashionable society this summer, go out—alone, mind you—to a farm

house that I know of, stay three months—six it may be, put yourself under the care of a physician whom I shall recommend, and do in all things as he tells you?”

“You might as well ask me to be born again.”

“Precisely, that is what I shall require of you.”

“Is this that you have told me the sum total?”

“Far from it. The hardest is to come. You will leave your trunks at home. There will be no need of them at Cosy Nook, I promise you. You will get a mountain suit, and a few plain dresses, loose-belted garments every one—not a fashionable corsege among them all, not a trail either; short skirts to clear the ground; you will not take a music-book along with you, though as much history, biography or science as you please.”

“But what shall I do with myself? I can’t sew all the time, and I shall die of ennui.”

“You will sew not at all,” he growled, in his fiercest manner. “At your peril you take so much as a needle or a thimble with you.”

“But suppose I tear my gown?”

“Borrow. Mrs. Graham has a darning-needle, or something of the sort? but I’ll have no hemming of frills, not stitching of furbelows. As for exercise, Dr. Ludlow will prescribe that. Will you accept the terms?”

“You promise a cure?”

“I promise: that is, if you obey.”

“Well, I will go.”

“You can get the consent of your estimable mamma?”

“See here, Doctor Werner, you can abuse me as much as you please—I don’t mind you; but you shall speak respectfully of my parents.”

He laughed.

“There’s good stuff left in you yet,” he said, “you’ll get well—you’ll get well.”

But the doctor had not been so very far wrong in dreading mamma. She protested lamentably.

“It will kill her, Doctor Werner, I know it will.”

“I’ll warrant that it won’t,” said the amiable doctor.

“But she’ll grow rusty in her music, and outré in her manners. Why, doctor, you are setting yourself to tear down the whole fabric which I have been all these years rearing with so much pains.”

“I trust in Heaven that I shall accomplish it, madam.”

“Well,” said mamma, at last, “you will find, Doctor Werner, that my daughter will remain a lady, in spite of you. Her health, her life, it may be, is at stake, and I give her up to your direction for six months, but after that—”

“If I can’t cure her in my way,” said the doctor, “she must die in yours, that’s all.”

Well, it was a comfort at least to be free of a dressmaker. I got a tidy little sempstress whom the doctor recommended, and had my dresses made. They were not so hideous, after all. Ribbons and trinkets were not tabooed, and with the help of these in moderate allowance I could see that I was still, if not exactly presentable in the court sense, at least not a fright.

Two modest trunks contained my summer wardrobe, and amid many tears and lamentations, and with papa for escort on my journey, I betook myself into exile.

I shall never be able to describe to you Cosy Nook; at least to give you an idea of the way it impressed me. Its name was its best description. It lay among the Berkshire hills, sunny and quiet and steeped in verdure. Afar in a valley one traced the iron track, and often in the early morning a curling cloud of vapour as it rose among the hills; or, if the air were heavy and the wind east, a faint, far whistle of the locomotive spoke for the nineteenth century. But that was all there was at Cosy Nook to remind one of the world of trade and travel. But we had sunshine and birds and flowers lavishly. And Mrs. Graham, our presiding genius, was as calm and motherly and sweet as the good angel of one’s dreams. As for Mr. Graham, he was the salt which gave us savour—a thin, sharp, wiry man, good at heart, full indeed of the milk of human kindness, but keen, caustic, witty, and always breaking out in unexpected places.

I have described Mr. Graham to you, not because he is in himself so much to my story, but because he was most unmistakably the paternal ancestor of Miss Honora Graham, the young lady of the house. To this day I can hardly trust my pen to speak of this young person with serenity. She was tall, straight, elastic, like her father; direct as a gunshot in her secret purpose, but provokingly wary and secretive in her manner of going about it. In her the caustic wit of Papa Graham was just sufficiently softened by the creamy flow of Mamma Graham’s good-humour to make it impossible that one should resent her well-aimed shafts, but not at all impossible to feel decidedly hit by them. With her penetration, her vivacity,

her constant and aggressive activity of mind and body, she would have been, but for her importunate good-humour, about as comfortable a neighbour as a galvanic battery. In fact, the comparison does the battery injustice, for it does at least mind its own affairs.

For the first three days of my residence at Cosy Nook I had enough to do to study Miss Honora. Our first interview was very characteristic, and I shall detail it for you.

Obedient to the instructions of Doctor Werner, I had retired in the late June gloaming. It was a curious sensation to disrobe myself in the twilight, comb out my hair with a dusky wraith looking out at me from the mirror that seemed less like myself than like some shadowy ghost who might be supposed to haunt this unfamiliar room; to lie in my bed, with the rose scents and honeysuckle odours blowing over me in clouds of coolness and refreshing; to watch the pink and violet and amber hues fade out of the west, and the sapphire deepens and the stars come out. It was a luxury of restfulness, and all the ways to my minutest capillaries it permeated, soothing and healing and helping. By nine o'clock I was asleep; wrapped deeply in a calm and healthful repose, such as I had probably never known before in my life.

The consequence was that the morning sunlight woke me early. The mist was rising from the valley; the birds were holding infinite jollifications in the cherry trees about my windows, and from the farmyard, which was distant fifty rods, perhaps, there rose a mingled tumult of glad sounds that first amazed and then amused me.

Remembering Doctor Werner, I rose quickly, and put on my pretty cambric morning wrapper. I remember lingering before the mirror to observe that plainness of attire was not necessarily destructive of either grace or beauty, and then laughing at myself for the notion that either grace or beauty were of the slightest importance in this rustic wild.

It was then that I went slowly down the front staircase, and on the verandah met Miss Honora.

The young woman had been absent upon my arrival yesterday, and had not returned until after my early retirement; so this was our first meeting. She made a sweeping courtesy, as I appeared on the piazza, and said:

"Miss Vivian, I presume. I am Honora Graham, and I have the pleasure to wish you a good-morning."

I replied courteously to her salutation, and she went on with her occupation, which was putting birdseed and fresh water into half a dozen cages of canary birds.

It will undoubtedly seem a curious weakness to my masculine readers that my first sensation in Miss Honora's presence was that of having encountered a rival. You may place the fact to the account of vanity, and the insatiable desire of the female heart for empire, or you may call it a presentiment. I hold my own theory, and you are equally welcome to yours. Certain it is, however, that the sight of Miss Honora's trim figure and bright eye and prompt, energetic way of doing things, together with a certain indescribable something in her manner which gave me an impression of shrewd sense, keen wit, and great perseverance, had the effect to impart to my surroundings at Cosy Nook just the zest of opposition and rivalry which it needed to be healthful. I really think, looking back upon the time, that Miss Honora was constructed upon hygienic principles. That is to say, that, never having so much as a headache herself, and being alert and brave, and in a manner sympathetic, she really possessed tonic qualities for those about her. However, that is by the way.

Miss Honora went on with the care of her canaries, and at the same time chatted with me.

"How does your first mouthful of the morning air of our valley affect you?" she asked, with a good deal the manner of a physician who is examining a patient.

"Oh," I replied, "all the scenery here is novel and beautiful; just now my only query is, will not the novelty wear off? will not the beauty pall upon one's tastes? How does it agree with you who have lived here, I judge, some years?"

"Ever since I was born," she promptly answered. "Well, I manage to do without waltz-music and flirtations, and all those charming accessories of life which one accustomed to them doubtless finds indispensable. But then it is of course something to be to the manner born."

"Have you much society here?"

"Enough, such as it is; scattered, social, humdrum."

She stopped just then, and, shading her eyes with her hand, peered curiously off toward the east, where a tiny black speck upon the road, at least a mile away, indicated an approaching traveller.

"Humph!" she said to herself, and then went on with her work.

From that moment, however, I had only half her attention.

"I suspect," she continued, "that our society will not pass for much with you. Doctor Werner writes that you cannot walk, or even ride far, without fatigue. How do you imagine you shall amuse yourself?"

"Oh," I replied, a little drearily, I fear, "I have a book or two of biography and summer travel, and I suppose by-and-bye I shall form a companionship with nature, and maybe—I don't know—I shall get some amusement out of you. You look like a young lady of originality and resource."

"Humph!" she said again, in that queer, grim way which seemed one of her characteristics.

By this time the solitary traveller upon the road was approaching the gate of Cosy Nook.

"There's Doctor Ludlow," she said, "coming home half starved and as pale as a ghost from some all-night visit. He must stop and get his breakfast before he goes farther."

She went out and hailed him in the most unceremonious manner, and they had a long and apparently interesting chat over the wheel. But the doctor wouldn't stop for breakfast. He left word, however, that he should call to see his new patient at about ten o'clock.

I must say that Miss Honora's familiarity with my doctor that was to be did not impress me altogether pleasantly. I could not tell why, except that one likes to be on confidential terms with one's physician, and—well, certainly a physician should not have young lady confidants. But then I had no secrets, so why should I fear Miss Honora? Was it the presentiment? You shall answer the question just as you please.

The breakfast-bell rang, but little did Miss Honora care for so small a circumstance as a breakfast-bell. I went in, however, and met Mrs. Graham's motherly face in the hall.

"Good-morning, doctor," she called from the verandah. "Won't you come in?"

"No, thank you," I sounded a cheerful voice from the carriage, and then there was a moment's chat about the invalid up the valley.

Honora came in, her hair flying, and her face aglow.

"Well, Miss Vivian," she said, "you have need to make yourself very entertaining this morning, for you have certainly lost us the doctor's company. Such a thing never happened before as that he should pass this house at breakfast-time when he had been out all night. But then he was looking haggard and at his very worst."

"Let him go and welcome then," growled Papa Graham. "Ludlow is no beauty at his best. Beauty doesn't run in the family."

Miss Honora had the face to blush at that. If the truth must be told, I liked Doctor Ludlow less and less each moment.

"It seems," I remarked, "that Doctor Ludlow is an unmarried man."

"Now, my dear young lady!" exclaimed Papa Graham. "However did you guess so much as that? Uncommon penetration, upon my word!"

"I cannot imagine why, otherwise, Miss Honora should take so deep an interest in him," I said, joining in Papa Graham's laugh.

Again Honora blushed.

"Why," she said, "he is an old friend of the family, that is all."

I am free to confess that I had my own opinion about that last sentence. I believed it to be an unqualified fib, and I was condemned to be for six months under the medical care of another girl's lover, and that girl a person living in the house with me, and a sharp girl too, like Honora Graham! I began to meditate a retreat. But then really I did not dare face Doctor Werner without at least having had one interview with my new physician. I fancied myself telling that gentleman, with his dreadful sagacity, the real reason of my quitting the rural Eden into which he had introduced me. No, certainly that would never do.

Who shall tell that mysterious principle was at work in my heart at half-past nine o'clock? I dragged myself wearily up to my room, and freshened my face with a bath, and rearranged my hair, and brightened my toilet with a ribbon of the latest fashionable tint, which happened to be very becoming to me, and put on a tiny diamond ring which I had saved out from my jewel-casket, and an antique locket, on which the Vivian coat-of-arms was enamelled in the most brilliant colours, and set with diamond sparks. With my pale, woo-begone face I could not flatter myself that I was beautiful, but at least I could be elegant and interesting.

Mamma Graham matronized me through that first trying interview with wonderful wisdom. And

Doctor Ludlow? Well at first view I pronounced him as ugly as a bear. He was tall and dark and shaggy—that is, his hair was dark, but his face was waxen pale, which certainly gave him a striking look. His lips were very red too, and his eyes large, black and sunken. My second thought about him was he is just such a person as I might have expected Doctor Werner to recommend, for by that time I had realized that he had wisdom and force and penetration, and, above all, wonderful magnetism. The great physique of his was charged full of electric fire and impulse, and yet by the poise and carriage of his head I knew that it was all under rigid control.

Here was a man, to be sure, for a study. A different specimen altogether from a London fop. If he had not gone and gotten himself engaged to that tiresome Honora, there might have been amusement in him. I hate engagements anyhow!

For one thing I blessed Dr. Ludlow. In that first interview he did not ask me a single question about my health, nor even about my medicines. Dr. Werner, he said, had told him all that was necessary, and for a week or two he imagined his sole duty would be to overlook a little my habits of diet and exercise.

"For the first," he said, "I know pretty well what Mrs. Graham's table is, and only caution you against too many sweetmeats and too much cream. For the rest, we must contrive something gentle and interesting. She is to assist you a little about your gardening, did you say?" he asked of Mrs. Graham. "Ah! that is excellent. And I may hope, perhaps, that as we get better acquainted you will trust me to drive her out occasionally. A drive over these hills is often better for the patient than a formal visit, as it certainly is much pleasanter in a case like this for the physician."

On the whole, I rather liked Dr. Ludlow, or should have liked him if he had not been engaged to Honora.

Now that is a woman's way of stating the thing; but if I were to come down to absolute verity, I believe I should say that if I had not thought that he was engaged to Honora, I should not at that stage of the game have thought of being attracted by him, any more than of being attracted by dear cross old Dr. Werner with his snuff-box and his wig.

Doctor Ludlow did come to take me out for a short drive, and in that quiet, pleasant interview I began to get some real insight into the nature of my physician. He was not, I soon found, a mere man of routine in his profession. I hate an automatic biliousness, so much quinine; so much fever, so much veratrum; so much nervous restlessness, so much morphine; and then is done, having, when all is over and the patient dead, no more idea of those subtle sympathies and discords between mind and matter, which are the true secrets of disease and remedy, than his great ancestor the ape.

Such a man was not Doctor Ludlow. Our conversation commenced simply enough. A word about the last new novel—for Doctor Ludlow, I found, was a reader of novels, though not to the exclusion of more solid literature—then an apropos about the opera, by means of which I learned that my new physician knew more about it than I with all my opera-going and my enthusiasm about classical music. Then we diverged to flowers and natural history, and, for the first time in my life, I began to have a glimmering idea of what those charms of the chaste maiden Science are which can so fascinate and absorb the finest masculine minds.

I went home charmed with Doctor Ludlow. How could such a man have fallen in love with Honora Graham? She was bright and had good sense, which, though called common, is not after all so common an acquisition as it might be; she had some pretensions to beauty also, and her manners, to be sure, had a quaint and piquant force of her own; but then where was that refined and subtle grace of womanhood which any one could see a man so thoroughly masculine as Doctor Ludlow would be certain to demand? I feared the doctor did not understand himself, and was in danger of that greatest of mistakes, an uncongenial marriage. Though I were never to see Doctor Ludlow again, I should lament such a catastrophe for him. He was not a man to bear that kind of thing with sangroid. It would shipwreck him utterly. At least that was my judgment of him.

I watched the two with growing interest. Always when they met it was in such a familiar way. Often, too, there were little whispered asides and glances of intelligence which would be shockingly improper if they were not on more than friendly terms; and neither of them, it was necessary to admit, was capable of an impropriety. At times I thought it possible that I might be mistaken, but one morning I made a discovery which settled the matter beyond

a doubt, it seemed to me. There was a little sewing-room in a distant part of the house, into which I was never invited. That of course was not in itself strange, but I soon discovered that Miss Honora spent some hours of every day in this room, at work upon a very noisy sewing-machine. In whatever part of the house I secluded myself, the noise of that machine most pertinaciously followed me. Different distances gave to its monotonous hum different similitudes of sound. In one room it sounded like the rumble of a coming railway train. In the parlour, I remember, I always thought at the first instant that it was the rattle of a carriage upon the road; while in my favourite arbour in the garden, which was as far away from it as I could conveniently get, it was like nothing else but the ceaseless drone of a great blue-bottle fly.

It seemed to me that all the looms of Lancashire could hardly supply the raw material for such interminable sewing; but it never occurred to me what it was all for, until one morning, happening accidentally to pass the open door of the room, I saw that it was indeed the looms of Lancashire which were tributary to Miss Honora's industry. Sitting busily at her machine, there lay upon the floor, on either side of her, great white heaps of muslin and linen, which showed the unmistakable angles and amplitude of sheets, pillow-cases and table drapery.

So Miss Honora was getting ready to be married!

I rushed back to my own room, and shut myself in to the contemplation of this theme.

That evening, when Doctor Ludlow called, I was in my worst mood. He looked at me with suspicious penetration. I had not been six weeks under Doctor Ludlow's care without learning something of his moods. I knew that when he came in his face had been open, radiant, as if he had come to a pleasant duty—a duty the true fulfilment of which would give him for recompense not chiefly peace of conscience, but a rarer boon. I knew that dreamy, Utopian mood of the doctor's well. It never came at Honora's call. I had noted that, too.

At this present moment Honora sat by the parlour window hemming ruffles with most persisting diligence. She, too, was watching the doctor, and as his eye grew troubled and his forehead darkened at the chilliness and depression of my humour, she said:

"The barometer has gone down—hasn't it?—since you were here last. I think there is a storm brewing."

That was too much, and my eyes flashed tropically for a moment, but I was silent.

"I thought so," said Honora, coolly. "Heat lightning, you see."

The doctor did not seem to care for her in the least.

"Miss Vivian," he said, "Miss Honora's manner might easily provoke the storm she prophesies. The carriage is at the door; let us escape both her and her storms."

I was really glad when he said that, and smiled upon him for the first time that evening. Dr. Ludlow bent over me almost tenderly, as I drew the scarf across my bosom, and fastened it underneath my arm. When we were seated in the carriage he said to me:

"You are too sensitive yet to bear such strong tonics as Honora administers. I know her ways, and charming as they are to most people, who have the fibre necessary to meet her upon her own ground, they are too rough for you. When she annoys you always come to me. I think I shall know how to put her to flight."

He had meant it kindly, even tenderly, but my face waxed hot with indignation.

"Doctor Ludlow," I said, "I am not a weakling; I am not an infant. It may be that Miss Graham is naturally stronger than I, and altogether more worthy of respect and admiration. I deny nothing to those most potent charms which you so humbly confess; but at least if she were a stranger in my father's house, and an invalid besides, worn and wasted physically, so that whatever was in her of strength or force was at its lowest ebb, I would not taunt her."

At that a miserable fit of hysteria overcame me and I sat straight up in the carriage and, looking away from my companion, felt the hot tears roll down my face, and made no visible effort to restrain them. But I think my heaving bosom and indrawn breath told the whole story to Doctor Ludlow.

He took a handkerchief from his pocket, fresh and delicately perfumed.

"Take that," he said, gently, "and drench it with your tears. It pains me to see you weep, but while your eyes are so bright and your breath so laboured the tears will relieve you. You may lay your head upon my shoulder, so, if that will do you good."

It was said so gently, and with so pure a purpose, that I could neither mistake him nor be offended. In

that moment I owed to myself that it would do me infinite good to gather, in some way, into my own soul the strong magnetic force which constantly emanated from his presence; but I thought of Miss Honora, and drew myself up at once.

"Indeed," I said, "you must think me very weak or very wicked, to speak to me in that manner. I choose to consider that it is weakness with which you charge me—"

I was going to say I knew not what mad thing, when he interrupted me.

"Miss Vivian," he said, firmly, "you do well to suppose that I was thinking of your weakness. If you had been in your full strength, I suppose that you and I should never have met. You are, as you have said, weak physically, and your physical weakness impairs your mental strength. It was as your physician simply that I offered you what it seemed to me was the true and natural relief for a mood which you yourself must, in your cooler moments, realize was morbid."

I had grown quieter as he spoke, and now was ransacking memory for some of those artifices by which a well-trained woman of society can always avoid a scene or vanquish a foe, but not one of them would come at my call. Doctor Ludlow possessed somehow a charm which had put them all to flight, and I just helplessly drifted on.

He continued, his own manner growing softer as my eye lost its nervous flicker:

"You have been doing finely for some weeks past, but when I came in this evening I saw at once that something had gone wrong with you. I wish you would tell me what it is."

"Do you ask me as my friend, or as my physician?"

He waited a moment.

"As your physician," he said, at length.

"Doctor Ludlow, your fiancée is not at all times a comfortable neighbour."

He smiled for a moment, and there was a ray besides in his eye which I did not quite understand.

"Honora does not really mean to annoy you," he said. "I happen to know that her intentions towards you are altogether benevolent. But she is an original, and her methods are not just like other people's. What particular means of annoyance has she been practising lately?"

He did not deny the imputation; they were engaged, and I was—an imbecile! How I wished myself at that moment in a cave of the Himalayas. My mental sensations were those of a worm in the fire.

"Doctor Ludlow," I answered, "I cannot pursue this subject. I shall go home to-morrow."

"But your father's house is shut up. I do not see how you can well go home."

"I shall join my family."

"They are travelling, and you are not fit for that."

"I do not know by what right you assume such authority over me."

"I am your physician. If you prefer it, I can play the part, for a moment, of your friend."

"No," I said, "I wish you to play no part with me. You will continue to be my physician. You have demonstrated that I cannot rejoin my friends conveniently—"

"I think you have misinterpreted me wilfully," he said, interrupting me, but still without haste. "It would not be necessary for me to be insincere in order to take upon myself the rôle of your friend. In fact, I think I shall not ask your permission. For these past two weeks, Miss Vivian, we have been friends, and I do not propose that any freakishness on the part of Honora Graham should result in a change of that relationship. I like Honora, even admire and esteem her, and I am certain that she will make my brother a most excellent wife; but I cannot, on account of the prospective relationship between us, allow her to—deprive me of a profitable patient."

I did not dare look into his eyes, so I turned my face quite away and gazed upon the landscape as if absorbed in it.

"Are you speaking as my physician or my friend now?" I asked, as soon as I could command my voice.

"Miss Vivian," he said, "may I speak as your friend, as something more than your friend?"

He waited a moment, but I could not answer him. He took my hand. It was passive in his grasp.

"Miss Vivian," he said, "will you not speak to me?"

I turned shyly then and looked into his face. It was pale; his very lips were bloodless, and his eyes were hungry. I knew in that moment that he loved me. It was a senseless thing to do, but I took up his handkerchief, which still lay in my lap, and held it to my brimming eyes.

In that moment I felt his arm about my waist, my head dropped towards his shoulder, and hysteria

possessed me. He sat silent for three minutes, perhaps.

"There, that will do," he said, at length. "Your nerves will be steadier now, and, Maud, I am fearfully impatient. You must have mercy."

I looked up then and smiled.

"You will not frown if I say I love you? You will even suffer me to ask you to be my wife?"

"I am a poor, weak, miserable creature," I said; "not half worthy—"

He laughed at my confession, and said:

"Ah! now you will be cured, and that right speedily."

When we reached home Honora was out of the way, for which I was thankful. I went to my room and bathed my face, to remove the traces of my agitation, and when we met in the parlour I was as serene as a May morning.

But it never suited Miss Honora to see me placid. She had a theory, it seems, that I required rousing; needed chiefly a thorough taste, a good mouthful, so to speak, of the valleys of life. I think she was partly right, but Doctor Ludlow was wiser than she.

Honora watched and waited, I could see that, to know my mood of mind. I had some little apprehension, I must confess, as to how papa and mamma would receive my news, and this lent a seriousness to my demeanour which completely deceived her. In truth Doctor Ludlow was no unworthy suitor. When I gave him leave to do so he posted down to papa with his credentials, and as his family was unexceptionable and his fortune considerable these were really no serious objections to be made, though mamma did groan over the fact that I should not live in a grand London mansion, which it seems was the exact degree of good fortune of which she had been ambitious.

If the game had ended at this stage, Honora would certainly have claimed the advantage, but one last little scene of our comedy stilled her caustic tongue, and made her quite willing to bury all allusion to it in oblivion.

She had been quite aware of the effect which her array of household linen had had upon my nerves. So now, judging from my depression during Doctor Ludlow's absence, that I was overcoming my jealousy of her, she thought it wise to apply fresh stimulus. Going out one morning upon the bleaching yard, which happened to adjoin the croquet ground, I saw the same array of fine linen spread out in the sun, having evidently just been marked. I approached it, and behold every piece bore in conspicuous characters the name "Ludlow."

I bent over it, smiling to think how pretty the name was when handsomely written, and wondering how many pieces of cloth went to the filling of a linen closet, when suddenly I was aware that Honora was watching me from an upper window.

"Ah!" I said, looking up to her, "you see I have surprised your secret. It must be the brother of our good doctor, then, who is the fortunate man. Confess now that you meant me to think it was the doctor himself."

Honora was checkmated, and she was bright enough to know it.

"You did look so forlorn," she said to me afterwards, "on that first morning. I foresaw that you would not remain with us a week unless I prepared some sort of diversion for you, and I could think of nothing better upon the spur of the moment than to provoke you to a flirtation with the doctor. Our prospective relationship"—she said it without the shadow of a blush—"of course made it easy to appear on confidential terms with him, and—well, idleness on your part and propinquity did the rest. It has been rather a tame flirtation, after all, I think."

Miss Honora was right. It was a tame flirtation, and our married life has scarcely been more adventurous, but we have not wanted the zest of mutual love, and so are more than content. J. W.

MILLIONAIRES.—Where will the rich men come from?—What becomes of the sons of our great men? is a question that is frequently asked and as frequently left unanswered. The intellectual powers of the father, if predominant, seldom descend to the son. In a certain sense this rule holds true with respect to the ability to acquire and retain riches. If the father possesses this in a remarkable degree, the son, in nine cases out of ten, is a spendthrift. Examples of this are not wanting. The descendants of men who two or three generations ago rolled in opulence, held clerkships or other subordinate positions. Wealth, influence and ability in some families descend from father to son; but these are isolated cases, and, as exceptions, only prove the truth of the rule. Since they are so seldom retained in one family for any great length of time, the query, where our rich men of the future will come from, naturally suggests itself. They do come to the surface, and

gradually unfold these powers with enable them to manage vast enterprises, control millions, and wield a mighty influence. The result is not a freak of fortune; they are not kicked into good luck. Their success is merely the result of long and laborious years—a right appreciation of the details. Wealthy young men begin life just where their fathers left off, and, of course, end where their fathers began.

FACETIE.

THE PEN IS MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD.—This well-worn aphorism leads us to the inference that when a man observes, "You might have knocked me down with a feather" he means—the goose-quill.—*Fun.*

TO PARENTS AND GUARDIANS.—Think twice before making choice of a school in which the inducement is held out, "Diet unlimited." A sound education should be imparted without cramming.—*Fun.*

STATING AND GOING.

Mrs. Stumpy: "That is the a'mond tree, my lady. It always flowers before it leaves; it leaves directly after it flowers; and after it leaves—it stays the summer through just as you see it."—*Fun.*

REPAIRS AND DAMAGES.

Mr. Green: "Met with a railway accident! Dear me, very shocking! Going in for damages, I suppose?"

Mr. White: "No, sir. I have been going in for repairs!"—*Fun.*

EUPHEMISTIC.

Tomkyns (who has swallowed a bad oyster): "Hallo! What kind of oyster d'ye call that?"

Opener: "American, sir."
Tomkyns: "Ah, thought so. Knew him directly by his twang."—*Punch.*

THE LATEST THING IN BUDGETS.

Cleaver Shopman: "Sweet thing in budgets, ma'am; our own manufacture—and only five million and a trifle!"

Miss B: "I don't see any great novelty in it—and there's not very much for the money!"—*Fun.*

THE BANK HOLIDAY.

Papa: "Now, how shall we spend Monday most advantageously? You might take the girls, my love, to the German Bazaar; and I propose that as Charley intends to come out 'a Grecian,' he and I should have an instructive day at the Museum of Economic Geology!"—*Punch.*

BLOW, WIND, BLOW!

Harry: "Nurse, I wish a high wind would come."

Nurse: "What for, my boy?"

Harry: "Why to blow all the other boys' boats clean out of the water—then there would be room for mine."—*Fun.*

THE LATE PARKINGTON'S LATEST.—When Sir Garnet Wolseley objected to the offer of a Peerage that everyone would suggest for him the title of Lord Chasse-Café. "Pook!" observed Lord Hampton; "as if it was appropriateness that suggested titles! Nobody calls me Lord Mal-a-Droitwich."—*Punch.*

POLITICAL RUMOURS.—Rumour, which is invariably wrong, gave many reasons for the removal of Mr. Lowe from the Chancellorship of the Exchequer; one among them being that in his new department he would have opportunities of rewarding brilliant London University constituents with snug berths. It is whispered now that the real reason was that the statesman who proposed a match tax in order that he might let off a pun about ex luce lucellum was desirous in his next financial statement to remove the duty from champagne in order to commit a Shakespearean pleasantry about "Mumm Budget." We give these reports for what they are worth, which is precisely nothing.—*Fun.*

A SHREWED JUVENILE.

The sharp little children, varying in age from four to ten years, are certainly on the increase.

Every neighbourhood has its prodigy, but the following smart thing done by little Freddy Warner, in our village, is the best business in their line that we have seen lately.

Little Freddy Warner is a male child, of some five summers' growth, and his mother, like all good mothers, never lets slip an opportunity to impress upon her offspring's mind some good practical or moral lesson.

She had given little Freddy a fine apple, and said to him, "Now, Freddy, you must give half of the apple to your Brother Georgey, and when you divide anything with another person you must always be sure and give them the largest half."

"Yes, mamma," replied the little philosopher, looking sharply at the famous big apple in his hand, then suddenly looking up into his mother's face, he said: "Dear mamma, you take the apple and

give it to Brother Georgey, and let him divide it with me!"

PADUA.—Last year a young man was the victim of a joke played upon him by some of his friends, on the 1st day of April. This year remembering bitterly his April fish, he determined to avenge himself, and invited the same persons to sup with him at eight o'clock, promising them some game he had himself shot, and other delicacies. He arranged however with the proprietor of the trattoria where it was to be given, that the supper should be given at seven o'clock instead of eight. Meanwhile his friends had in their turn thought of something still better. They wrote a note to the restaurateur thus:—"Signor, the supper which was ordered for eight o'clock prepare for six o'clock, not a moment later." This was sealed with the cypher of the young man, and sent by the same servant who had already carried the game to be cooked. Afterwards, the gentlemen and the friends to be hoaxed were assembled in a café, laughing and joking. At half-past five the latter excused themselves, and went to the restaurant to supper. When the hour of seven arrived, the young man, quite contented, went to do the same, before his guests should appear. His feelings can be better imagined than described as the scene presented itself before him, and his only consolation was in making them promise strict silence, which they did most faithfully, as is evident from this report of the proceedings.

DECEIVER, GO!

I'll admit that once I loved thee,
That I deemed thee just and true,
That my heart has loved no other
Fondly as it once loved you;
Yet the ties of love are broken,
And the vows you made to me—
From this hour, and for ever,
You are nothing more to me.

I have found you false, yet lovely,
I have learned you could deceive;
And the many vows you made me
I can never more believe.
You have tried your power to lead me
From the paths of duty true;
But your power, thank Heaven, is ended—
I shall care no more for you.

Tell me not that it will grieve me
Now to part with one so fair—
Mention not your siren-beauty—
Come not with your charms so rare.
It is vain. I cannot worship
Aught your glittering wealth may buy,
And, although my hours be lonely,
I shall spurn thee till I die.

S. M. H.

GEMS.

VERNAL flowers do not always exhibit the same brilliancy, nor does the moon at all times shine with equal splendour.

Set a greater value on having received instructive and useful lessons than on possessing great store of wealth; for the latter is a transitory good, the former is durable.

WHAT a world of gossip would be prevented if it were only remembered that a person who tells you of the faults of others, intends to tell others of your faults.

Be not stingy of kind words and pleasing acts; for such are fragrant gifts, whose perfumes will gladden the heart and sweeten the life of all who receive them.

THOUGHTS come into our minds by avenues which we never left open, and thoughts go out of our minds through avenues which we never voluntarily open.

WOULD you have influence with those who look to you for guidance and instruction? Bear with you the law of kindness. Would you command their respect? Let your words, though they may inflict pain for the time, drop kindly from your lips.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CRANBERRY PIE.—There are various ways to make a cranberry pie; some make it open like a custard or pumpkin pie. This is good, but not so good as to cover like an apple pie. Do not stew the berries, as some do before baking, but slit each berry with a knife. This will preserve the freshness of the fruit, which is quite an important thing. A cup full of berries and an equal quantity of white sugar will make a medium-sized pie. Those who like a sweet pie should have more sugar, also more berries if desired. Bake as usual. A little flour

sifted over the fruit gives it a thicker consistency. One thing should not be forgotten, add a small tea-cupful of water.

LARD AS AN UNGUENT.—It is well known that rubbing the body with hog's fat has the effect of reducing the temperature of the skin in scarlet fever. The fat portion of smoked ham has been used with beneficial results. A celebrated German physician recommends to incorporate one or two grammes of carbolic acid into one hundred grammes of lard, and, with this, to rub the whole body, excepting the head, two or three times a day, according to the intensity of inflammation characterizing the case in hand. The effect of this kind of treatment is to produce a pleasant feeling of coolness, to keep the skin softer, and after each application the temperature of the skin falls somewhat. The carbolic acid operates to destroy the germs and spores of the disease.

MISCELLANEOUS.

A COMMITTEE of Italians has been formed for the purpose of raising a fund among their countrymen towards the erection of a statue of Byron at Venice.

THE Exhibition of Works of Art in Black and White, which last year possessed such high artistic interest, is to be repeated during the approaching season; the gathering will be opened to the public about the middle of June next.

THE new National Gallery contains at least one room twice the size of the largest in the present gallery. Many pictures, almost an equal number to those now exhibited, are packed away for want of space. They are not of the first rank, but many of them will excite great interest when they are once more exhibited.

FRANCE and England signed an International Convention for the re-establishment of the second fast train between the latter country and Italy by Paris and Calais. According to the treaty, the Cabinet of St. James's engages to pay annually to the Treasury a subvention of 380,000fr., or about 1,055fr. for each train.

On the 9th April, a memorial window, placed at the west-end of Folkestone parish church to the memory of Dr. William Harvey (discoverer of the circulation of the blood), who was born at Folkestone about 300 years ago, was unveiled in the presence of a large congregation. The memorial was projected by the vicar, and subscribed to by about 3,000 medical men.

ADVICES have been received from Shetland announcing that the Greenland seal fishing has been attended with fair success. The following indicates the extents of the catches:—"Brik," of London, 40 tons; "Artic," 95; "Ravenscraig," 65; "Esquimaux," 90; "Active," 65; "Campdown," 50; "Tay," 45; "Polynia," 25; "Narwhal," 25; "Victor," 9; and "Intrepid," 9. The fishing might still be augmented.

ANGLOMANIA IN PARIS.—French journalists are just now lamenting over the rage which is prevailing among their fellow countrymen for everything English. They say that the Paris ladies have taken to giving their children English names, and instead of calling them Jacques and Diana call them Jimmy and Di. It is becoming the fashion in certain aristocratic circles to talk French with an English accent. Still more marvellous, English cookery and English millinery are superseding French.

MAINTENANCE OF PAUPER LUNATICS.—Dr. Williams, medical superintendent of Hayward's Heath Lunatic Asylum, has published a tabulated return of the maintenance rate for pauper lunatics in all the county asylums in England and Wales for 1872 and 1873. The return shows that the average weekly maintenance rate in 1873 in the forty-five asylums was 10s. 9d. The average weekly maintenance rate for the Sussex Asylum at Hayward's Heath was 9s. 6d., being 8d. less. There were only six asylums, including the Sussex Asylum, in which the rate was lower in 1873 than in 1872—in the majority the increase was very considerable.

THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER.—It is stated that the revenues of the duchy have in twenty-five years increased from 29,000l. (in 1847) to 59,000l. (in 1872), the net payments to Her Majesty at these two periods being respectively 12,000l. and 40,000l. "Although," the report adds, "this last amount may not be continuously kept up from year to year, there is every reason to believe that it will very shortly be not only maintained but exceeded." The present condition of the duchy and its revenues, the report says, "cannot be regarded otherwise than as most prosperous and progressive. Its relations with its tenants are upon a satisfactory footing, the farms are well let and well cultivated, the house property is rapidly increasing in value, and land is being brought under building operations, which will materially enhance its present and prospective value."

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"Stokes on Memory." 46th ed. One Shilling. Houlston and Sons, 7, Paternoster Buildings, London; H. and C. Treacher, 1, North Street, Brighton, etc.—The extraordinary feats of memory accomplished by students of Mr. Stokes's system of Mnemonics ought to be convincing proof that there "must be something in it." But our author goes much farther. He says: "The practice of mnemonics not only aids and improves the memory but is highly conducive to habits of observation; it quickens the perception, affords most wonderful assistance for the orderly and systematic arrangement of facts and thoughts, increases mental concentration, renders the mind calm and clear, increases self-reliance and self-respect, exercises ingenuity and imagination, produces pleasing vivacity and sparkling wit, strengthens the reflective faculties, and thus tends to keep the propensities in subjection, and to develop refinement of taste and purity of sentiment." Such a consummation is indeed devoutly to be wished. The desirability of possessing a good memory is too obvious to need demonstration, but those who have hitherto considered themselves hopelessly deficient in mental retentive power may take heart from the assurance of Mr. Stokes that the memory of any person not quite an idiot can be easily and rapidly improved. Association of ideas is the principle upon which our author works, and he tells us that there are four kinds of memory—tongue, ear and brain—and the "perfection of association is that which secures the united and harmonious action of the greatest number of powers which can be brought into use for the object desired." Mr. Stokes has devised various mnemonic keys which of course are imparted only to his pupils, but those who desire to improve their memories and are unable to obtain the advantage of Mr. Stokes's personal instruction will find in this book most valuable suggestions, and will do well to bear in mind his golden rule "Observe, reflect, think thought with thought, and think of the impression."

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

JOHN J.—The letter has been received.
FRANK P.—You should make your own selection.
F. W.—The lady will probably think you have been much too careless.
W. D.—Thanks for your suggestion; it is worth consideration.
JAMES L.—Should opportunity arise the offer will be considered.
CHARLIE.—The announcements are inserted without charge.
EMILY T.—Your note and its enclosure has been received.
H. H. (Hull).—Such a letter should be sent to the editor of one of the more purely scientific journals.
E. G. B.—Both the handwriting and spelling are in need of improvement. The look of hair you sent has been mislaid, so we must defer the opinion as to that.
LIVINGSTONE.—The only song in honour of this gentleman is published at 2d. by J. Guest, 52, Fenchurch St., E.C.
MAHIAN.—The writing would improve by care and practice, that is if it needs improvement, for it looks very much like a disguised hand.
CORA.—Abercrombie on the Intellectual Powers is a book which can be recommended for the purpose named. Your handwriting is remarkably good.
T. B.—The letter is faulty and defective in many particulars, for which reason your request cannot be complied with.
ALFRED W.—The indices of THE LONDON READER are expressly compiled for such purposes as your letter inquires for. They can be obtained by remitting three halfpenny stamps to the publisher.
CONSTANTINE.—Early hours, a suitable aperient, regular outdoor exercise, and a cold water morning bath at this season of the year, are habits which you will find suitable under the circumstances.
JENNY P.—Louisa is a name often connected with some illustrious deed; the name of Lily is emblematic of purity, and Amy of love. Your handwriting is very nice and plain.
R. S.—The verses about "Noble Names" contain many good ideas and are distinguished by some worthy and noble sentiments, but they are disfigured by occasional inappropriate phrase and by a great inattention to metrical arrangements.
A WIDOW.—In ginger beer made without yeast, honey is substituted for the yeast. Ginger beer can be made with the following ingredients: 2½ oz. Jamaica ginger, 3 lbs. brown sugar, 1 oz. cream of tartar, 2 lemons, half a pint of brandy, quarter of a pound of honey, 3½ gallons of pure water. Bruise the ginger, and boil it and the sugar in the water for about half an hour, rather under

than over. Slice the lemons and put them and the cream of tartar into a large pan, pour the boiling water into this pan, stir well and add the honey, cover the mixture over, let it work for three days, strain it into a cask, add the brandy, bung down close, and at the end of three weeks draw it off and bottle. The quantities above given will produce between 50 to 60 bottles full, and bear thus made will keep good for twelve months.
SKIN.—The freckle lotion should be applied to the face and neck by means of a small sponge. Two or three times a day is not too frequent. Of course it should be washed off before retiring to rest. You may conceal the colour of a naturally red face by means of violet powder, but you cannot make a naturally red face pale.

CAMIE.—The authorities would probably consider you were in time enough if you took out a licence within a year of the time at which the contemplated event happens. That is to say, a licence for the progeny may be deferred for this time; of course you already possess a licence for the mother.

MART STUART (Edinburgh).—We believe there is no compound that will make the eyebrows grow; your only chance then is in Dame Nature, and whether or no she will make an effort on your behalf depends upon your age, which very properly you have withheld. The sun is not sufficiently powerful in this country to effect an alteration in the colour of the hair.

J. B. W.—In reply to your first question we must give you a negative; with regard to your second all we can say is, try Steel's Rheumatic Gout Pills, they are invaluable and have done more to soothe the afflicted than many other nostrums with loftier pretensions. You can doubtless be supplied by any chemist in your neighbourhood.

J. L. H.—We cannot congratulate you on your attempt at verification, if indeed the attempt is seriously to be considered; and if otherwise the joke is a poor one. You seem, upon this view of the subject, to display a sort of waste of quasi-comic force such as would make one of our stern economists mourn over the large sheet of excellent foolscap you have written upon, to say nothing of the loss of ink, the wear and tear of your fingers and of your brain.

WHOM IS THE BABY LIKE?

Whom is the baby like? You or me?
Hardly as yet do her features show
(Lying so helpless upon your knee),
Whom she will be like when she shall grow.

Chubby and shapeless is baby now,
Dimpled and rosy and small and weak;
Blue as your own is her eye, but how—
How will her voice be, when she shall speak?

I think she will be like her mother then,
Graceful and slender, with golden hair
Glistening brightly in sunlight when
She shall have grown, and tall and fair.

I think she will grow like her mother, dear,
Be like the maiden that won my heart;
Some day a stranger will gain her ear,
 Wooing our pet with a lover's art.

She shall be ours for a few years, though,
Our little daughter shall linger here;
She will not leave us till she shall grow,
Till she shall be like her mother, dear.

I hope she will be like her mother, dear,
Then she will gladden her lover's life;
Be to some stranger as dear and near
As you have been to her father, my wife.

D. A. C.

VERNON H.—From the hesitation apparent in your letter it would seem that you are no more in love with the lady than she is with you. Love has many counterfeits and fancy goes a great way. You refer only to your mutual acquaintance and yet are disquieted at the hint of a rival or two. If the fair damsel had overlooked you as you wrote about giving up, she would have saved you trouble and quickly have said adieu. For our part we say give her up by all means because "Faint heart never won Fair Lady."

E. S.—The present government have undertaken to deal with the question of local taxation and have already contrived to its relief from imperial sources. The inquiry into the City companies will not be long delayed. In the meantime it is gratifying to find from the statistics that notwithstanding the increase of population the number of paupers during the last two or three years has greatly diminished. It must also be observed that no Act of Parliament can eradicate his disposition from an oppressor, or make the weak strong, the stupid intelligent, and so forth. For such reforms we must await the still greater progress of civilisation, education and Christianity.

MAID OF MORA.—You will find it difficult to acquire practical knowledge and efficiency in the art without serving an apprenticeship thereto; and even then you may require a few years' practice to make you perfect. To write for you a few more lines about a theory which when put to the test has in your case failed is only again to raise hopes which from the nature of the case are likely to be disappointed. We have often said that while a short memorandum about the nature of any art may possibly satisfy a passing curiosity, it can never enable a person to produce an article in the same condition as those are produced by manufacturers as distinguished from amateurs. You should order the back numbers through a newsagent.

CHARMING EDITOR.—The hair has unfortunately been lost. The handwriting is good. A little more freedom is desirable, but you will obtain that with practice. Your letter contains thirteen orthographical and grammatical errors. A good adviser would tell you to think less about love for the present and more about self-improvement. There is a time for all things, and the season of love has in your case hardly arrived. In the days that pass away before you become so smitten that you will be able to make your choice, you would do well to consider that, as a rule, a girl's parents are her best advisers as to her future husband. Marriages made without the consent of

parents seldom turn out happily. There are few things more true and unerring than a mother's instinct when her daughter's welfare is concerned, and there is nothing on earth more unselfish than a mother's love. Remember also it is to the interest of the parents that the children should marry well. A good match is always facilitated by papas and mamas; they hinder the bad matches only. From a bad match or an unprincipled lover you should be thankful to escape.

A HOUSEKEEPER, thirty-five, dark-blue eyes, and black wavy hair. Respondent should be a widower and a tradesman, who can provide a good home. NELLIE, twenty-three, medium height, fair complexion, domesticated, and of business habits, wishes to correspond with a dark gentleman.

MARIA E., considered nice looking, and has a little money, would like to correspond with a sergeant in the 1st Life Guards, with a view to marriage.

ROYAL TRUCK, twenty, M. Sin., and good looking, wishes to correspond with a young lady about his own age, who is fond of home, and domesticated.

CAST ADRIFT, twenty-one, 5ft. Sin., dark complexion, a seaman in the navy, desires to correspond with a young lady, who is loving, and domesticated.

GOOD-TEMPERED ELIZA, twenty-seven, brown hair and eyes, fair complexion, and good looking. Respondent must be dark, tall, and fond of home; a tradesman preferred. A widower not objected to.

LOVELY ANNE, twenty-one, medium height, dark hair, blue eyes, fair complexion, and good looking. Respondent must be tall, loving, fond of home, and respectable; a tradesman preferred.

GEORGE THE SECOND, twenty-three, 5ft. 8in., dark complexion, and fond of home and children, wishes to meet with a young lady accomplished, and possessing a good income.

A SOLDIER, twenty-six, 5ft. 10in., dark-brown hair, fresh complexion, blue eyes, handsome, and has some money. Respondent must not be over twenty, a good Templar, and of a roving disposition.

BILL W., thirty-two, 5ft. 2in., light complexion, fond of home and children, of an affectionate disposition, and future prospects good, wishes to marry some eligible young lady.

JONES M., twenty-three, 5ft. 10in., dark and considered handsome, wishes to correspond with a lady, who is pretty, good tempered, affectionate, and fond of home and children.

J. C. H. S., twenty-three, 5ft. 10in., fair complexion, blue eyes, and light curly hair, would like to correspond with a tall young lady about twenty-two, and of a loving disposition.

HORS CONFOITS, tall, good looking, in a good situation, with very good prospects. Respondent must be good looking, tall, loving, able to make a good wife to a good husband, either dark or fair, and possess some 500l. or 600l.; a young widow without children not objected to.

BURN AND EMILY. "Ruth," twenty-six, fair, domesticated, and fond of home, "Emily," twenty-five, dark, domesticated, and fond of home and music, would like to correspond with two gentlemen from thirty to forty, income not less than 100l. per year, and must be good tempered.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

GIPSY QUEEN is responded to by—"E. H.," twenty-one, tall, dark, and a steady, industrious mechanic.

F. W. by—"E. E. B.," who thinks she will answer his description.

AMY C. by—"Neta," twenty-six, 5ft. 11in., fair complexion, and thinks he will suit.

ELIZA W. by—"Mia in Tack," twenty, who thinks she is all he requires.

EMMA by—"Jim Backstay," who thinks he is all she requires.

PRESERVANCE by—"Lettie," a young lady of good family, very affectionate, and a good housekeeper.

W. H. by—"Lizzie," twenty-two, dark, loving and fond of home.

CECILIA by—"Slow Coach," a City clerk, twenty-three, well educated, dark, good looking, not very tall, holds an excellent situation, with good salary.

LILIAN by—"Reginald," twenty, a clerk, in receipt of 100l. per annum, with brilliant future prospects, dark complexion, handsome, good singer and dancer, and can play several musical instruments, a loving disposition is the main feature, and will be found in him if accepted.

MAY by—"Harold P.," twenty-one, 5ft. 8in., very respectably connected, a clerk, in receipt of 100l. a year, rather dark complexion, which seems to be rather against "May's" wishes, but "Harold" thinks that a loving heart would fully compensate.

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